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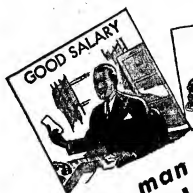
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I HAVE BEEN IN THE CAVES

(Short—8,500) by Margaret Rogers 8

Illustrated by Julian S. Krupa

This is not fiction, says the author of this manuscript. She has been in the caves with the Terol

REJUVENATION ASTEROID

(Short—5,200) by William Lawrence Hamling 28

Illustrated by Enoch Sharp

The search goes on—for the secret of eternal youth. But there is such a thing as too much youth.

THE SECRET OF SUTTER'S LAKE

(Novelet—25,000) by Don Wilcox 38

Illustrated by Ned Hadley

Beneath the placid waters of Sutter's lake was something that demanded the revealing light of day!

LIKE ALARM BELLS RINGING

(Short—5,600) by Robert Moore Williams 84

Illustrated by Julian S. Krupa

When the atom bomb went off, it started alarm bells ringing all over the solar system . . .

THE MIND ROVERS

(Novelet—27,500) by Richard S. Shaver 96

Illustrated by H. W. McCauley

There is a world in the mind that is generally thought to be imaginary. But what is imagination?

DEATH SEEMS SO FINAL

(Short—4,500) by Alexander Blade 136

Illustrated by William A. Gray

One thing about dying—it seems to put a period to everything. That's why we fear it so . . .

MR. WILSON'S WATCH

(Short—5,200) by H. B. Hickey 144

Illustrated by Enoch Sharp

A watch is a simple mechanism, and it is used to measure passing time; but Mr. Wilson's watch . . .

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EXTRAVAGANT FICTION TODAY COLD FACT TOMORROW

JANUARY, 1947

VOLUME 21

NUMBER 1

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Front cover painting by H. W. McCauley illustrating a scene from "The Mind Rovers"

AMAZING
STORIES
★
JANUARY
1947

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Volume 21
Number 1

The

OBSERVATORY

..... by the Editor

THE mind is a strange thing. Much goes on in it that we do not understand. In this issue we present a story of Richard S. Shaver which many of you will find of special significance, called "The Mind Rovers." In a way it is part of the famed "Shaver Mystery" although it is presented as straight fiction, yet we know that psychiatry would nod approval to the background and admit that in this respect it is one hundred percent scientific fact. So, when you journey into a weird world in the mind of man in a prison, remember that you are being treated to an adventure that COULD happen in a man's mind. For those of you who believe in the power of the mind, the adventure will be all the more real, and all the more significant. This is one of those pioneer stories that herald the new science fiction that has been introduced by AMAZING STORIES alone, now that fact has caught up with the old type science fiction, so that it no longer holds its old fascination—which is the fascination of the unknown. We'll have more to say about that in a future issue of AMAZING STORIES.

"MIRACLE MAN," by Dorothy & John de Courcy, is still another evidence of the brilliant new fiction that is flashing across AMAZING STORIES' horizon with such force as to command the attention of even such literary magazines as *Harper's*. In it we find a doctor who becomes a GREAT doctor because of . . . a voice? We think it is more than that—something real, placed in a fiction story, which is happening to millions of people today, to their confusion and bafflement. We know you'll thrill to it in a future issue.

AND now, luckily, we are able to present the story we've sought for so long, the true story of Margaret Rogers, of Houston Texas, who told us Shaver's cave people were not all evil, such as the dero (obviously she hadn't noticed his reference to the tero), and said she'd been in the caves too, in Mexico, and spent three years with the tero. "I Have Been In The Caves" seems to be sincerely told, and we present it with the same sincerity. Read it and decide for yourself. At least, read it and think! Don't kid yourself that she's lying, because she isn't. However, that doesn't mean you can't put your own interpretation on it. We'd be

interested in what you feel about the story. It's real proof that the "Mystery" is real, although we are a long way from complete solution.

LATEST attack (jump on it, Mr. Baring-Gould—that word attack, we mean!) on your editor by the dero (persecution complex—my, my) is the hypnotic ray attack on a group of fans who rapidly proceeded to spread a rumor to the effect that your editor had been committed to an insane asylum! The news spread from coast to coast and to Europe within two weeks! Busy little bees, those who spread gossip! But the rumor produced hilarious results. For instance, your editor learned who his friends were when they all expressed their candid opinion of him now that it was safe to do so. One old friend wrote our psychiatrist two full pages of how your editor had been crazy since ten years old, and recounting all the things your editor has done in his life which prove it. If our psychiatrist actually had gotten such a report, you can imagine how swiftly the strait-jacket would have been employed! Most humorous angle is that the informant himself got out of the army on a section eight. It is now rumored that many red faces are glowing all over the country, red faces which lose none of their luminosity when encountering your editor—who has never laughed so much in his life! Really boys, no hard feelings. How else would you sell the editor? He's too stupid to recognize a good story when he sees one—or is he? Besides, it was the dero who did it, so we feel you are really blameless—except for those happy lads who did such a grand job of spreading the story. Within twenty-four hours we had phone calls from coast to coast, and within a week, cables from the continent! P.S., we don't know if it was a "hypnotic ray" or not, but what else can we do but apply the ready explanation of the "caves" to it?

DON WILCOX comes back to our pages with "The Secret Of Sutter's Lake" which will delight you as have all of his hundreds of stories. By the way, Don is a Professor at Northwestern University now, teaching—you guessed it, writing!

"REJUVENATION Asteroid" is by our Associate Editor, William Lawrence Hamling, a product of his pre-editorial days, but a fine story even if it does mean complimenting our staff.—*Rep.*



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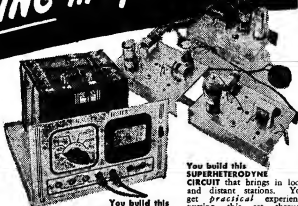
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I HAVE BEEN IN THE CAVES

by MARGARET ROGERS



Julian KRUPA

Whatever the Fire-Blower touches, it obliterates



**She called for help, and the
cave people heard and answered. She
was taken down and given new health**

WHEN a norther hits Mexico City, all who have lived there for at least ten years shiver in their boots. Your blood is thin by then, and the wind cuts through you like a knife. Thus it was that I drew the faded ankle-length cape closer around my emaciated body, and wondered dully how long I would have to stand there before I could amass four pesos—three for a gram of heroin, and maybe one for a room. I already owed two pesos on my room at the small hotel, so going back there again was out. At the worst I could go to

Note From The Author

BEING DEVOID, I believe, of literary talent, I shall only endeavor to set down the facts just as they occurred. THEY have given me permission to tell my story to the world. It can harm no one, quite the contrary, it may help those who believe in good and not wholly in evil. There are many who will recognize the places and people of whom I speak. Also, this is in public recognition of the kindnesses which those of the caves have shown me.¹

* * *

¹About a year ago we got a letter from Mrs. Rogers telling us Shaver was wrong about the cave people being mostly dero—that those she had lived with in the caves were tero, or good. The letter was anonymous. We tried for a year to locate her, and we finally succeeded. Here is her story, given just as she wrote it for us. We leave its truth to your judgment, but do not judge it until you have finished reading it, together with our pertinent footnotes which indicate why we believe it.—Ed.

a girl friend out in the suburbs and stay all night. As for eating—well, a drug addict doesn't need much food, and with ten cents I would get a sweet bun and a cup of coffee.

As usual, I had taken my stand near the American Club, on Bolivar Street.

I'd been there five hours since one o'clock in the afternoon and my pocket was still empty. Hopeless and resigned, yes, but I still could and did pray. Here I stood, an outcast, thirty-nine years old, a slave of the drug, pitted by smallpox, ugly, ragged, and an object of pity and scorn to my countrymen, a receiver of alms. *My country?* I couldn't recall it except dimly, the houses made of lumber, something one never got to see in Mexico. The yards with flowers growing in them; here it was patios. Oh Lord, if I could only go there freed from the drug's enslave-

ment. Yet, to whom could I go, where and how? I still remembered the names of my brothers and sisters, but how could I hope to locate them among all the millions of people living in the U. S. A.?

I sighed wearily, and unthinkingly spoke aloud, "God, I've pleaded fifty times a day for a chance to be cured, or to start life over. That promise of yours, 'Ask and ye shall receive,' hasn't been fulfilled so far as I am concerned. What shall I do?"

I'd been so deep in my misery I hadn't heard anyone approach, then at a hand on my arm I looked up and saw Doc Kelmer, of the Electro-therapy Institute. A kindly man of about fifty years; he had never passed me by. He knew, as everyone else did, what became of the money he gave me, but he saw eye to eye with the Reverend A. T.

Wallis, a Presbyterian minister who always said, "Maggie is ill, I disapprove of the dope habit, but only she with divine help can rid herself of it, so I cast no stones. I give her money, sometimes I feed her, and *never* refuse her."

Now Doc just stood there watching me. I'd never noticed his eyes before—those strange gray eyes—they were almost hypnotic.

"You are ill, Maggie?"

I nodded, "Yes, Doc."

"The dope?"

"Yes, I need it now, badly, I haven't had a shot. I took the last one hours ago. I can't go to Tepito to get any more. I haven't got a dime."

He leaned against the doorway.

"Maggie," he said slowly, "I wonder when you are going to remember? Think hard, Ban Dalij. The day you speak a certain word, then and then only can I really help you, not with a few dollars, but permanently."

I didn't know what he was talking about or what I should reply, I felt a five-peso gold piece pressed in my palm and he turned to go, but came back again and now those strange eyes were smiling.

"It has just been told me, Maggie, that before twenty-four hours have passed, you *will* call. Take the package given you, and for now take this, bathe and clothe yourself, get your hair cut, get food and rest. This will suffice, I think." His hand came out of his pocket and when I saw the twenty-peso, gold piece, I nearly passed out. I was stunned. But I asked bitterly,

"How can you trust me not to spend it on dope?"

"You won't," he said confidently, and then he was gone.

I TURNED to go, too, just as Joe, the negro porter came out of the American Club. Always courteous and

respectful, even to me, he stopped me.

"Just a minute, Miss Maggie, ah've got a package heah fo' yo'. Just wait, ah'll get it." When he returned, and gave me the bundle, I asked curiously,

"Who left it, and what is it?"

"Well, I was told not to tell, but the lady who left it said you-all was goin' to need it."

I had meant to go straight to Tepito, but I just had to see what that paper contained, so I stopped at a small hotel, got a room, and opened the gift. I had plenty of time—it was only seven—and the dope seller never showed up until eight-thirty. I was struck dumb when I saw what was in that package, an expensive new black dress—my size, too—low-heeled black slippers, silk undies, sheer stockings, and last but not least, a lovely white silk dressing gown. How I wanted to wear those things! Impossible, though; for with those clothes on, no one would ever give me a cent. I couldn't work, even if I wanted to. I'd tried to get a job, but no one would hire a dope fiend, but at least I could and did try them on.

I definitely kept the shoes on, but the rest of the things I wrapped up and put under the mattress. I guessed it must now be eight o'clock, so locking the door, I hurried to the zocalo and caught a jitney to Tepito. I got the drug, all right, but took the precaution to slip the paper containing it under a lock of hair and secured it with my side comb, catching a jitney bound for town. I felt as though things were turning out all right after all.

As I sat there two men boarded the jitney. Oh, I knew them. Yes, indeed, they were narcotic agents. So when they motioned me to get off at the next corner, I obeyed without protest. (I'd been arrested many times before.)

I followed them meekly into a small grocery store, one of them flashed his

badge at the proprietor and led me into a back storeroom where they began to frisk me. I was, as you can imagine, desperate. If they should find that packet, off to jail I would go again and this time they would probably send me to the Islas Marias—Mexico's prison islands.

Hopelessly I prayed, "Help me, please, God." Then the queerest words came unbidden to my lips, "*Maca sin Tamil.*" It was then and there that the odd happenings began. The seeming effect those words had on those two men was astonishing. Both of them turned as if they had forgotten I was there, and walked away. One of them actually had his hand on that packet of mine and by all the rights should have found it. They had searched my purse, and hadn't taken the money I had there; that was a miracle in itself, for these agents seldom if ever fail to line their pockets at the expense of the drug addicts.

Somehow I felt as if I, the poor snow bird, had received divine help and that feeling persisted during the hours that followed. Next day, I ate, bathed, and rested. Night came again, and again I went to Tepito, only to find that the police had been there and were still hanging around somewhere.

As a result, all the vendors had gone "underground" and we all knew they would hide out for at least two days. By that time I would be in Hades, for there is no hell like the one an addict goes through when she needs her dose. Death indeed is preferable.

BACK I came to town, but when ten o'clock came I was in a bad way. That is a date that will always remain in my memory. Ninth day of January, 1930. Shivering and nauseated, what good was the money I had in my pocket if I couldn't get the life-giving

medicine I needed? What was it Doc had said? As though someone had told me I muttered, "*Kayu staya ma, il Tamil,*" and then wondered what the heck I said and why.

I wasn't surprised when I saw Doc Kelmer. It was as though I had expected him to appear. His car was at the curb; I guess I just hadn't seen him drive up. He looked at me steadily for an instant.

"Are you ready?"

I nodded and got in the back seat of the car. It was as simple as that.

He didn't speak until we were at the city limits on the road leading to Cuernavaca. When he asked, "Are you sick?", I answered by being disgustingly sick, leaning my head out the car window. That was enough answer, and he offered me a small vial.

"Drink it all," he ordered, "then lie down and go to sleep."

I emptied the vial. Lord, it was bitter, but if it had been poison I'd have taken it with pleasure. I was too sick to care whether I died or not.

It must have hit me like a thousand bricks for I fell asleep immediately. The absence of motion awakened me. I sat up and noticed how brightly the moon was shining, and that we were in mountainous country. In fact, the car was almost touching a mass of greenery growing at the foot of a tall mass of rock.

The thought came to me that we were near Ixtaccihuatl. Doc was standing still as a statue, touching the foliage. I almost fell out of the car and promptly proceeded to have another nausea. When I, at long last, straightened up and wiped the tears and perspiration from my face, he came up to me and putting his arm around my shoulders, said,

"You called, Ban Dalij, and I came. You had faith in what you are not

sure of. Do you wish the mercy you have asked for?"

"If I die, I will do whatever you say, Doc."

With a nod of satisfaction, he turned back to that greenery. Raising both arms above his head, he wailed rather than spoke, a few words.

As in a dream, I saw that whole mass of greenery slide to one side, to reveal a large opening. By now, it seemed that anything could happen, but for some reason, I had no fear. He might have been leading me to my death in some sadistic rite, yet I followed him boldly in.

The door closed. For a split second darkness reigned, then the cave was filled with a strange bluish light. I walked as though I were ordered to do so, to a large block of black marble along one wall of the cave, and lay down upon it. . . .

I FLOATED above cool green waters; looking down I watched the strangely colored denizens, playing and frolicking about. But, although with all my might I tried to descend and examine them more closely, I found it impossible to do so for quite some time. Then all at once I was able to submerge; the cool water closed over my head. But I had no sensation of drowning. Then oblivion, broken once or twice by my seeing as in a dream, a vast room. I dreamed (or did I?) that many giant figures were all about me. That a soft lavender light was shining down on me, but I felt such heavenly relief from pain that I had had for so long, that I floated away again.

Again, I seemed to realize that I was on a table, that I was entirely unclothed, and one of those giant figures was bending over me. When at last I really and truly awakened, I looked around me in wonder, unable to under-

stand where I was and how I came there. For a moment I was sure I had died; that room was so large and all the furniture in it had been made for a giant to use.

Odder still, furniture and walls alike all seemed to be made of silvery metal; even the bed upon which I lay was of metal. I say bed, but it was I found out later, fifteen feet long and nine wide, covered with a soft white fur.

As for me, I felt heavenly clean, weak, but as if I had never known what pain was. Whoever had cared for me had dressed me in that beautiful robe the unknown lady had given Joe for me. There were soft sandals on my feet. Also an empty feeling in my inner woman, which I finally diagnosed as hunger, a feeling I had not known for twenty years.

I was so ravenous that I decided to do something about it. Rolling over and over I reached the side of the bed, and the large cabinet resembling a radio caught my eye. It couldn't be a radio, for on its flat top there were at least three hundred push buttons. I found out later there were three hundred and fifty. Timidly putting forth a tentative finger, I pushed one of the buttons. If my heart had been weak, I'd have died then and there. A section of wall slid back and in walked the largest woman I had ever seen. Then I was sure I was somewhere out of this world. From beneath her golden helmet with the tiny wings fell a cascade of coal black curls. Her short-skirted garment was sleeveless and seemed to be made of little golden links.

I've seen purses made out of mesh gold just like her dress. Leather sandals laced to the knee were on her feet, and her face—she was all the beautiful women I had ever seen rolled into one. In her hand was a flat shiny disk and as I shrank back from her she smiled,

raised that disk to her mouth, and of all things spoke to me in Spanish.² Her voice was no louder than an ordinary human's, so that reassured me.

"My name is Mira (pronounced Meera). I know you are afraid, but do not be, as our brother sent you here. Sagi has made you well again. You are hungry, no?"

I told her I was hungry, yes, but, I asked curiously, "Why do you put that disk to your lips?"

With a broad smile she lowered the disk, and so help me, I thought some one had turned a radio on full blast. I clapped both hands to my tortured ears and grimaced with pain. Replacing the disk, she spoke again and now her voice was normal.

"You see, little one? Your ears are not made for voices like ours." Touching one of the push buttons she resumed, "First of all, you must eat, then I shall tell you all you want to know."

GEE, that was service! Again, a section of wall slid back, a table came sliding over the floor to my bed. On it were fruits of every description, bananas, mangos, chirimoyas. These were familiar to me. Not so the small purplish pear-shaped fruit. There were small cakes made of what I took to be dates, and a metal container filled to the brim with a pale green, foamy liquid. This latter I surveyed with distrust, I'd rather have had a good cup of Uruapam coffee, but Mira pointed to the container and smacking her lips, rubbed her tummy and said, "*Muy sabroso*" (very tasty). To be frank, I was afraid I'd offend her if I refused, so I called on all my nerve and tasted the concoction. I fully believe that is

what the gods on Olympus called "nectar of the gods." It was a sweet drink, made of fruit and tasting more like an ice cream soda than anything else.

I emptied the container and put it down. It promptly filled to the brim again. I sat frozen, goggle-eyed, unable to speak, which brought a gale of laughter from that giant of a woman. She enjoyed my amazement and proceeded to dumbfound me still more by showing me the wonder of that radio. I shall call it that, for want of a better name.

When one button was pushed, it began to play, of all things, a popular Mexican song "*La Negra Noche*." Another button brought a program in English, and so on. Some of the languages I did not understand. Maybe it was a phonograph. She said no, that it was an invention which surpassed the radio, because it needed none of the things a radio has to have. For example, it brought a play from a New York theatre, a family quarrel, a mother crooning a lullaby to her baby. It could bring sounds from not only all the outer world, but from all the underworld. When the novelty of the thing had partly died down, I asked what day it was.

I was told it was the fifteenth day of January. That made me open my eyes. Where had I been all those days? Taking the cure. What time was it now? That amused her, and she explained to me that she and her people worked twenty-four hours. Where did the bluish light come from? That was put there many centuries ago by the scientists of their race. I was told that when I wanted to get up she and Arsi would show me around.

Who was Arsi, I asked? That question of mine brought a blush to her lovely face, and she tried to evade my question by telling me she had been ap-

²The reader will note the similarity to Shaver's *teleaug*, which translates all thought into the particular language used. Or into any other language, if so desired.—Ed.

pointed my guide and mentor.

"You," she said, "will be taught all you should know by our wise men. I shall show you all you are allowed to see. There is a reason for this, which you will learn later."

I determined not to be sidetracked. "I want to know who this Arsi is that you speak of, is this person a man?"

I wanted to know *all* about Arsi and I guess she finally decided she would have to tell me if I were going to give her any peace. Arsi, she explained, shyly, was her intended husband. In a short while she would be of age and they would be wed.

"To be able to wed a girl must be, according to our way of reckoning time, eighteen years of age." She ended our conversation then by bowing and leaving the room.

I, having noted the button she pushed to get music, promptly began to experiment with the radio. By the way, I heard one program from New York. They sang a song I shall never forget. It was, "That's My Weakness Now." I hummed it for days after.

I tried to do as Mira had told me, to sleep and rest, but that was impossible. In sheer desperation, I pressed the button she had indicated as hers and in she came, so quickly I guessed she must have been outside waiting for me to call.

THIS time she was not alone. No, indeed. With her was the handsomest giant I have ever seen. I had thought she was huge, but he topped her head and shoulders. Like Mira, he wore a gold mesh garment, but it was a two-piece affair. His helmet had an ornament representing the sun, and the sandals on her feet also were laced to the knee. But he was as blonde as she was brunette. His eyes were green. He strode up to me, sinilingly he placed

a disk like the one she used to his lips.

It wouldn't have startled me near so much if he had spoken in Spanish, but there was an unmistakable Yankee twang to his words.

"I presume you are Miss Maggie?"

I couldn't speak, and he resumed, "I am Arsi; we are happy to welcome you."

"You, you speak English," I stammered. "Yet you are one of these people. Now maybe I can get a clear, sane answer to all the questions I want to ask."

"What do you want to know?"

"First," I said, "I want to know where the dickens I am at. How I came here, who these people are, and how it is you speak English?"

"Rather greedy, aren't you?" he smiled. "But I don't blame you. I shall give you all the answers, but I do not expect you to believe me. At least not now.

"Here you have it, believe it or not: I was, before my disappearance from the world and my renewal here in this world, in succession, scholar, lawyer and judge. I was a surface man, but I had always been fully aware of my kinship with these people, whose name by the way, is the Nephli.³

"Here is a world far underground, a

³This matter of "disappearance" is one of the things Shaver stresses. 132,000 persons are listed as missing every year in this country. A recent (August 13, 1946) report on missing young girls in Chicago for the first seven months of 1946 is 145, all unsolved. Where do they go? Is this the answer? And this business of "renewal." Is it the same as Shaver's "nutrient rays"? The word "nephli." What is the meaning of it? Your editor has not yet traced it down, but perhaps some of our readers can give us the information—which seems to us to indicate, in some way, death. Do these missing persons die, and are revived in the caves? Is this how Shaver's "slaves" are "kidnapped"; by the use of rays that actually transport matter, by dissolving it to energy, then reforming it—"death" and "renewal"?—Ed.

world whom no one knows of, except those who have blood kinship with them. But on with my story. The day I reached sixty years of age, I was eligible for renewal. I had learned how cruel and greedy humans were, so, I simply vanished."

Up to now, I had listened with an open mind, but that statement of his about being sixty years old, was the last straw. Why, the man couldn't be more than twenty-five years old. Renewal?

That would mean that he had lost at least thirty-five years. Bosh! I didn't say so, but I thought it, and he read my mind. Silently he turned to that blank wall and stood as though in deep thought. Suddenly the room became dark, and a section of the wall lighted up. Just like a moving picture, a scene was shown of a street teeming with people, and great tall buildings. From one of these latter stepped a man.

Seemingly, he was walking toward us, and as he came nearer I could see his face plainly. He looked as I imagined Arsi's father might have looked. That face was lined with care and suffering, and I think disillusionment. The camera taking the picture seemed to recede before him, and so finally he came to a fine, large house, then we were in the salon. He stood for a moment, face looking down, his hands made a signal. Then he was gone. That scene, too, faded, and another took its place; now we were on Bolivar Street, in Mexico City, and there I was, standing in the doorway.

Doc Kelmer stood beside me. The whole scene was reenacted just as I have narrated it here. I went to Tepito. There were the agents walking away from me; but now I could stand no more. A feeling of awe, of reverence and gratitude came to me and I began

to cry. It seemed to me that many things I hadn't understood before were clear to me now.

"What have I done good in my life to deserve such help?"

ARSI gave a wave of his hands and the scene faded. The bluish light came on again. There was a moment's silence. I think they were embarrassed at the emotion I was displaying. I was drowned in tears.

Then Arsi said gently, "Go on, cry all you like; those tears are washing away all the bitterness," and as I stopped crying, "There, that's better. First, you were saved because you were unfortunate. You are fundamentally good. By heritage you are Neph blood. You were weak, yes, but that weakness comes from the strain of human blood in you. Human? How silly. We are all human, though those of the surface would not call us so. The Nephli civilization was far advanced when we went underground. Those of the surface strayed from our teachings, scorned help from the Mother race; and see to what they have come. Now they are a proud, arrogant people who would have had more to be proud of if they had followed the teachings of their ancestors. Remember all of this when you return."

When I returned? "You mean I have to go back," I asked.

"Yes, you are not yet ready to be one of us. You will go back, freed from the drug. You will have to pay a penance, and it will be paid in hard work, decency, denial, helping others, with kindness shown to others less fortunate than yourself. Before the time is up you will be notified. Then when the time has arrived you will say the word that will bring you back to us. Rest now, and later we will take you to Harji, he who knows all that

is past and all that is to come. *Jelis sur Tamil* (God bless you)."⁴

With this, he left and Mira and I were alone. I was taken up like a baby and taken to a magnificent bathroom. That bath sunken in the floor was large enough to accommodate five people my size. No fixtures were visible, but the moment I was laid down in it the water began to rise all around me. I wonder if that water had some sort of soothing qualities about it? I know Mira was bathing me and I must have fallen asleep, for when I opened my eyes again, Mira was standing by my bed, and said, "Your breakfast, little one."

There fruits, half a melon, something like a cantaloupe, an egg, but what an egg! An ostrich must have laid it, I thought. It was as large as a small cantaloupe and must have weighed nearly two pounds, yet it tasted just like a hen egg. After breakfast, I was told to dress, given a contraption something like telephone operators use, which was placed on my head and over my ears. Mira picked me up as though I were a baby, and the wall slid back and we were out in the corridor. I should say street; for that was what it was like. I was placed gently in a kind of car that stood as if it were waiting for us. This vehicle had no motor, no wheels, but reminded me of the pictures I had seen of a torpedo, a torpedo with two seats.

SHE had no sooner taken her seat than we were off. That was a ride! Other cars passed us in a blur of speed, and I said to myself, here goes nothing. How in the name of all the saints was she going to stop that thing if she just

sat with her arms crossed and did nothing? When the car finally slowed down a little I could see that on the level where we were there were no openings in the wall, but high above our heads—I should say about 25 feet high—was a lighted strip. To my question, I was told this was a walk; in other words this was a street, along these streets were the apartments, living quarters of the Nephli.

There was no time to ask more for the car shot into a vast courtyard and stopped in front of a door. Lifting me out, Mira carried me to the door which opened, as if by "open sesame," and we entered another huge room, the sight of which to me was vaguely familiar.

The great table, the dozen or so huge figures moving around us. Then it dawned on me. I hadn't been dreaming after all. This was the place and the people I had seen when I saw the light which soothed me so. These were the surgeons. One whom I now know was the master surgeon, came forward, took me from the arms of my mentor, and sat me on a table. Just as any earthly doctor would do, he took my pulse, raised the lids of my eyes, looked at me carefully, then held his fingertips close to my body somewhat as a magician does when he is going to hypnotize you. But a stream of light flowed out from those fingertips, and I *felt* it penetrate my body. I would say it was some sort of an X-ray for after moving that light over every part of my body, he nodded as if highly gratified, and the light went out. He took a step back, and bowed, actually bowed, to me.

"Magee, tell him you are well, now; he understands you."

"Thank you, sir," I stammered, "I am well, now."

To my surprise, he said something I

⁴*Jelis sur Tamil*. What language is this? Do any of our readers recognize it? Please note other examples of the language in this manuscript. Enlightenment would be very helpful to your editor.—Ed.

thought no living person knew. He said, "Mark this well. When your accident with the auto happened on Republica de Argentina St., you recovered your memory, didn't you?"

Then, "Do you know how you came to lose it—why you were a victim of amnesia?"

Mutely, I shook my head. I only knew, according to the family who raised me, that my father, who was a friend of theirs, had brought me to them one day. He had told them my mother was dead and that he could not take care of me. I had a deep cut above my right eyebrow and apparently was dazed. Later I sank into a coma from which I aroused days later, but with no recollection of my past life. As far as I have been able to ascertain, I knew no Spanish, yet when my foster parents spoke to me in that language, I answered in kind, and fluently.

The accident he referred to happened when a car struck me and I again lay in a stupor for five days. When I came to I remembered details of my childhood, the names of kinfolk, but nothing of how I came to Mexico, nor how I was hurt.

This man seemed to know, but he evidently did not want to tell me. When I asked he only smiled and said something to Mira. She answered in the same tongue and picking me up, carried me out to the car again, and back to my room.

I SHALL, from here on, touch only on the highlights of my stay. I met many of the people, and they were all so kind to me. Many times, two or three of them would come and take me to different parts of the cave world. I visited the library where all the written works are kept, books in every language, and on every subject. Even newspapers. One funny little news-

paper I laughed at a great deal was a tiny paper no larger than our present day magazines in size, and only two pages. It was dated way back in the '80's. That and another little paper. One was called "The Surprise" and the other "The Grasshopper." I took a copy of each, and I still have them after 17 years. One the corners of a book bound in sheepskin there were ornaments of some metal resembling gold, made in the shape of a maple leaf. One of them came loose and I asked if I could have it.⁵

The Custodian gave it to me willingly, later I strung it on a chain and I still have it. While there I saw many articles of surface manufacture. According to Mira many of the Nephli lived on the surface, many were scientists, doctors, lawyers, judges and even higher in the government. But how could that be, I asked, when because of their huge size they would be marked? That last struck her as very funny and when she recovered from her mirth, she explained that the Nephli were masters of a reducing ray as well as an enlarging ray. These men are sent to the surface to search for those who have even a small strain of Nephli blood in their veins, to acquaint them of their heritage and aid them.

"Your grandfather was a pure blood Nephli," she stated. "Looking through the screen one day he saw a surface woman with whom he fell in love. He asked for and got permission to be re-

⁵ Since the publication of Mrs. Rogers' letter, many of our readers have visited her, and, although your editor has not seen these articles for himself, he understands Mrs. Rogers has them. Now, are they significant? Or is the book corner just a surface book corner; and are the two little papers just papers published in the '80's on the surface? Perhaps some of our readers could tell us if this last is so. If it were so, it would prove nothing; but if it were provable that no such papers were ever printed on the surface, it *would* prove something.—Ed.

duced and ascend to the surface. The Rejii gave him their consent and blessing. He left us and sought out your grandmother to be and married her. After she died he came back to live with us and to await the time when she would be "changed."

"Where is he now," I asked.

Her reply left me breathless, but by now I couldn't disbelieve anything these unbelievable people said.

"He is on the Mother Planet."

I had learned not to ask questions when she turned away like she did now. Lazy days passed, and days when I wished I had something to do. Then one day, she and Arsi arrived with a group of young people, laughing and gay. We were to go on a trip, to the gardens, she informed me.

I was placed in one of those infernal bullets and away we went. Arsi told me afterward we had gone about two thousand miles in less than two hours, but I know it wasn't any fun going fast you could see nothing but a blur. They could see all right for they made comments about the scenery.

Suddenly, we shot out of that long tunnel into sunlight, not that it was bright "sun," but the light was faintly lavender. One could see the sun plainly was not blue, but a grayish color. I truly believe that was the most perfect scene I've ever seen. We traveled over perfectly smooth roads, past fields, green with grain and vegetables, came a stretch of forest where the trees were five times taller than any surface trees, and with leaves as large as my head, then another great stretch of fields. A lake of lovely blue water. In the dis-

tance I could see mountains, then the car slowed. As it stopped I could see a tall cylindrical object, as tall or taller than the tallest trees. From that smoke-stack—as I mentally called it—came a sound of cathedral bells.

I looked inquiringly as Arsi, but he only smiled, until we came closer to the cylinder and the sound of bells became louder, with more of a warning tone to them. Instead of going on the way we were headed, the car turned to the left. The country back of those mountains must have been afire, for a red glow lighted their tops and was reflected on the "sky" which I learned was really the roof of the immense cavern where this simulated outdoors was situated. I learned later that those mountains were in a huge ring, that those cathedral bells were some kind of a warning signal, but never did I find out *what* was outside that obviously fiery ring. I was given very definitely to understand that it was forbidden territory.[†]

WE RETURNED by a different route passing small stone dwell-

[†] Here is one of the most significant "proofs" your editor has, which supports Mr. Shaver's cavern world. From other sources, we have received a "report" of this same "ring of flame," except that this informant describes it from *without* rather than *within* the ring, as does Mrs. Rogers. Also, her every statement, although she does not know what the flame is, is entirely consistent with the other report. No one but your editor knows of this other report, not even Mr. Shaver. It is a policy of ours to keep significant items secret, so that if a confirming report comes in, we know that it is valid. If we were to report in the pages of AMAZING STORIES the details of such information, then subsequent letters giving the same information from people who could not possibly be associated with the first letter-writer, would be worthless, being merely imitation of what we'd published. That is why we "keep secrets," as some of our readers decry. But when we have assembled a mass of proof that cannot be explained away, we intend to publish a book outlining all of it. Your editor knows what the flame ring is, why it is maintained, what the warning is that Mrs. Rogers hints at, but cannot understand.—Ed.

⁶ It would seem here that Mrs. Rogers believes you must "die" to get into the caves. Many of our more mystic-minded readers have "explained" the whole mystery by this means. If we were to accept this, then how account for the fact that Mrs. Rogers is *alive* today (provided, of course, her story of being in the caves is true)?—Ed.

ings, and this time we saw many Nephli in the gardens and fields. These were the farmers. Near one of the giant trees we stopped and ate our lunch, consisting of fruits strange to me, cooked flesh of fowl, resembling chicken, and that frothy green drink called *pachi*. It was then that Arsi began to give me an explanation of many things which were puzzling me.

"Just so you won't have a headache trying to puzzle things out," he said, "I will tell you a few things about our life here. We are now in what is known as a garden, one of many, belonging to my people. You see, we have no winter or summer here, so, we always have fresh grain, fruit and vegetables. The lake gives us fish; that chicken you ate is from one of our poultry farms. Only it isn't chicken, it is a fowl as large as an ostrich. The "sun" is a ball of pure energy which was placed there by the first of our race to inhabit the caves. This was done many thousands of years ago. Of that you will learn later. Here we do not need money. Each one has a trade system. Say you need a garment, and you are a shoemaker. You trade a pair of sandals for a robe. The gardens are run the same way, I mean by that they are a community project. One family group plants, another reaps, another brings in the crops. Those people that live in the stone houses tend the crops."

While he talked I wished from the bottom of my heart I had had a chance to get a real education, to study the things that he had studied and understood so well. What of the bells, I asked. His face became grave and the only answer I got was this.

"Sometime when you are fully one of us, wholly Nephli, then you will be told what they mean. This much I can tell you. They are a warning as well as a tolling for those who must

pay."

It was useless to ask more. That was evident in the way he changed the subject.

"You want to know how the cars we drive can run without wheels or motor. That too would be impossible for you to understand now, but in a word they are driven by thought. You doubt this? Very well. Get in the car. Think very hard. Concentrate on the thought that you want it to go. When you wish it to turn or to slow down and stop, it will do so. Now," and he picked me up placing me in the car, "we'll see how powerful your thought impulse is."

I have never been accused of being a coward. I'd always try anything once. So I thought very hard, "Move car, move."

The result nearly frightened me out of my wits. The darn thing came alive, and nearly jerked my head off. To save my life I couldn't think.

But clearly into my mind came a voice, as I hurtled along. "*Parda, parda.*" Then "*Espac di mani.*" (Turn car and return)."

Desperately I repeated the words and that car turned around and in a few seconds we were back. The car stopped in front of our party, and Arsi and Mira were laughing at me. As for me, never again did I try to manage one of those things.

DURING the days that followed, I visited, perched on Arsi's or Mira's arm, the home of the Nephli. Large blocks of marble spread with soft furs served them as beds. Their tables were made of stone, as were their rooms. Those who had more than one child had eight and ten rooms. Children did I say? I saw babies as large as a ten-year-old. At that age an earth child would be crawling. Ten year olds were about my height, five-feet-five.

One day I visited the school of that section. They were taught by a man who had lived on earth and passed his renewal when he became sixty. I was stunned, after they had introduced me to him, to hear him say, "Hi lady. I hope you'll like it here. By the way how does little old New York look now?"

I still had enough breath left to tell him I had never been in New York.

"You know," he confided. "I'd give anything if I could see my daughter's face, if she could see me now."

I asked him where his daughter lived and what her name was.

"Mary Landrum. She was a very lucky girl, she married a rich man and she thought I was crazy because I told her we belonged to the Nephli. You see, I knew, but she declared school-teaching had driven me mad. Why she even planned to have me sent to a madhouse. I knew what she was planning to do though, and so I retired to my room one evening and called on my people for help. I've often wondered what happened when she found I was missing, although I suspect she was secretly relieved. It wouldn't have looked nice for her to have people know her daddy was in an asylum."⁸

He taught English to the small fry of the underworld. As for the higher educational departments, this surface brain of mine will never be intelligent enough to understand all they taught.

⁸ If this statement is true, it ought to be checked with the missing persons bureau of New York. If there is a Mary Landrum, and her father did vanish and was never seen again, it would actually prove nothing regarding the truth of Mrs. Rogers' manuscript, but it would be interesting and contributory material. We are writing the missing persons bureau and will report. However, Mrs. Rogers mentioned in a letter we have that she has substituted names for the persons actually mentioned in her story. If so, the Mary Landrum lead will amount to nothing.—Ed.

You see, I never went beyond the third grade in school. All that I write here is not mine. My hand is guided, for in writing a letter I cannot spell at all correctly.

One day Arsi said some things I did not understand. He pointed out a huge bearded man to me.

"That man," he said, "comes from the planet Venus."

My bewilderment showed on my face, for he elaborated.

"He came on the last space ship."

"Space ship? You mean ships like aeroships can go to other worlds?"

"That's right," he answered. "We have colonies all over the known and unknown universes. That is, unknown to surface astronomers. Soon another ship will be leaving and if you remind me of my promise I will take you to see it off."

I had to be content with that promise and the next day I started to school, a moving picture school, and through it I learned more than I ever dreamed of. I went to bed each sleep period reliving the scenes I had witnessed. Mira went with me sometimes, but more often it was Arsi. As he put it, "I never get tired of seeing the beginning of the one hundred."

THE first scenes were of a beautiful world. Sometimes the light came from a green sun and other times from a faintly lavender sun. I believe the green sun was their night time, for at that time I would see very few people stirring about. We seemed to float over city after city. Then the City Beautiful. Words cannot describe it. It is what you imagine heaven would look like. Tall buildings, tinted of delicate colors, apparently of marble, towered into the sky. The people? Well, I thought the Nephli were giants, but these were twice as tall.

The "film" showed a public square. There was a temple. We entered. Giants in pale blue robes lay prostrate on the floor, worshipping. Suddenly one of these arose, bowed low to someone or something I could not see, and actually floated down the floor of the temple, out of it, and stood for a moment as if receiving instructions, down a broad hall, then into a waiting car just like the ones we used under the ground. Through great avenues, to an elevated platform.

Suddenly the car arose from the ground. Straight up it flew, and came to rest on that platform. Up we went with it, and I became aware only then that that platform was large enough to hold a city twice as large as Mexico City. There lay a fleet of great torpedoes shining as if they were made of silver. (Arsi explained that these were space ships). The being we were watching went in through the side of one of these, the largest of all. Then the scene faded. I was taken back to my room.

The next day I eagerly awaited the hour to go to the "pictures." The wall lighted up again, and there was the City. Until now no sound had accompanied the pictures, but now we were in the temple again and there was a vast throng of people there. That same great figure of a being was talking to them in a language unintelligible to me. He must have been choosing certain couples from among them, for from one side of the hall a being would step forward, from the other side another, etc. Whoever was showing the film must have moved it forward for I could then distinguish the faces of these beings. Some were black, some were olive-skinned, others were brown, and still others were white, like the beings I had seen inhabiting the city.

Arsi began to explain. "These are the different races from different planets

who were the chosen to inhabit this world of ours. Ten couples of each race, and four races. Then twenty Nephli, ten couples."

The scene faded for a moment, came again, and to my surprise we were now aboard that great ship.

"They are now in space, bound for this system. They have been in space a year and are now approaching Earth. Now watch this next scene. This is the landing."

I asked, "Why did we see no beings moving about on the ship?"

"Suspended animation, my dear." (I learned afterward what suspended animation meant.)

Now the ship was coming to life. We were in a great chamber, and all but twenty of the people were no larger than myself.

"Those twenty you see are the rulers, or guides, of the others, to teach them and start them in their new life. But," he added sadly, "these people strayed from the teachings of their friends and rulers, the Nephli."

THE scene shifted. Now we were in another place. A couple were left there. Another and another departed the ship until only the Twenty were left.

Now the scene shifts to a time where the Nephli have completed their cities. Their cities were perfect, their science was perfect. They knew how to prolong life even then. How to become larger or smaller in size. Some day you will know and see many of these marvelous things, but we will escape all the sordid scenes by my telling you that these children of the original eighty subjects rebelled against the Nephli. The Nephli could have crushed them as easily as one kills a fly, but they are a godly people who do not kill. Instead, they went underground.

How you ask? It was easy. Espe-

cially after the priest of Tamil asked Divine help. A vision was shown him on the wall of a large cave. He was instructed to explore deeper, and where the way was too narrow, to use the fire-blower (translated from their language) to widen the way. (That fire-blower was shown me. About the size of an Austin car, it shoots out a bluish fire which consumes everything with which it comes in contact. Whatever it touches is obliterated.) They took their machines, their records and their tools. With the vast caves opened to them their scientists manufactured a sun, beneath the rays of which grew trees, flowers and vegetables. Some of the seeds they had brought to earth from the mother planet. At first they were few, and depended on robots to do a share of the work. These are still used to some extent.

In their observatory—I will call it that—they do not use telescopes, but have the vision screen. What an improvement it is over the telescope. All they have to do is touch a button and the heavens pass in review even to their own system. That was my delight to look at the stars and listen to the chief astronomer. You are told by your astronomers one thing today and another thing tomorrow. One day they say Mars cannot have life. Next day they say it has. I say to you that it is written that very soon you will see for yourselves that all the stars and planets as large as Earth or larger have life, beings like ourselves. None of this four-legged, green-colored stuff. Their animals are more varied, yes. I saw moving views of them. Let me also say that if you could possibly see the home world of the Nephli you would only see what appears to be an overgrown edition of our moon, even to the craters. But their science has found a way to cover their world with a shield which makes it

look like a barren world. When it was first shown me on the vision screen I thought of pictures I had seen of the moon. Then Sogni Mir did something and it was as though we were looking at a world through a veil. As the misty veil faded we were able to see the same beautiful city I saw in the record screen. Now if they are able to veil their world in this way, why would it be impossible for other worlds to do the same thing?

ANOTHER curious tale was told me, and it fits in with the story of Jesus Christ. Once there was a man of the Nephli, named Jas Whal who was also a great scientist. In an effort to persuade the humans who inhabited Earth to turn from the false gods they worshipped, at the command of Tamil he was sent to the surface to teach of the true god and to give Man of the science he knew. That was why he left the world under us—the Tamion knew him no more. He was reduced to the stature of an ordinary man and came up to the surface in order to carry out the work assigned to him.

He taught these ungrateful people. He **PROVED** his divinity to them by what to them were miracles, but to him was pure science, know-how. Their eyes were too blind to see, only a few could understand or wanted to. They tortured him, and he who could have merely vanished from their sight, allowed even that in an effort to prove to them that he would die for them. He apparently died and was placed in a cave that was an entrance to the underworld. His people came and revived him. They took him back home, but he had to show those who believed in him that he was above death, so he appeared to those friends again and then vanished. Does not that sound like the miracles and crucifixion of

Christ? ⁹ The similarity is remarkable.

The living moving pictures of this man whom the Romans killed do not, however, resemble the popular conception we have of him. He is pictured as a man with a beard and long curly hair. Jas Whal, as the Nephli knew him, was a giant of a man by our standards. At least six and a half feet tall, short-haired. His hair and eyes were dark, but very white skin. There was nothing of the womanish appearance that is given to the pictures of Christ. Jas Whal was *manly*. And so, I think, was Jesus.

By the way, I was never allowed to see the Rejii (Ruler), but I know he saw me many times, for I received thought impressions from him and still receive them. My requests to Tamil are relayed through him. I also have the assurance that some day soon I shall see him with their eyes, as they see him.

TIME passed peacefully and pleasantly in the caves. Then came the day of Arsi's and Mira's wedding. I, as an initiate to be was allowed to be present at that wedding. In the Temple the lights were on full. Those two walked down to the altar. Behind the altar were thick, silvery drapes. They knelt there for about ten minutes, their heads bowed. Suddenly those drapes became misty, unreal, and they were gone, and the whole space behind where the drapes had been was filled with the loveliest yet the most inspiring light I ever expect to see. In the heart of that

⁹ Here, again, is a weird "proof." We have, written by Mr. Shaver, the "thought record" he calls "Mandark"—which is the story told to him over the telaug from thought records of the Life of Christ, as recorded by actual observers. This manuscript, an enormous work, is awaiting publication in book form, because its very nature precludes it as a magazine story. Mr. Shaver, when he reads this, will learn for the first time that Mrs. Rogers has also seen a minor portion of these "thought records" and that they do not disagree.—Ed.

light was something of unearthly colors, in shape vaguely like a hand, a gigantic hand. Two fingers of radiance shot out from the hand. One touched the head of Arsi, and the other the head of Mira, lingered for an instant and was away, and was gone. The core of the light seemed to recede farther and farther away to unheard of distances, and was gone. The drapes appeared again, and the two newlyweds arose to their feet, and on their faces were the glories of those who have seen God. No human wedding, with priest or preacher, could have been as beautiful as that.

DAYS later Mira and I were in the *gajoya* (room of machines). She was telling me what the different machines were for, when a shrill whistling arose. Her eyes were bright as she turned to me.

"*Hai*, another human arrives. Shall we go and see?"

I assented and we got in the torpedo, as I had named the car.

We arrived at the number one room just in time to see two of the Neph guardians of the door helping a man from the car. He was a nice looking fellow, I could see at a glance either American or English, and he was in a coma. Gori, one of the guards who spoke Spanish, but no English, beckoned me over.

"Little one, you speak the Earthman's language, no? Then come with us."

I went willingly, for I could see the man was badly hurt, but he came to as I looked at him.

"Hello mister, you are an American, aren't you?" I asked.

"Thank God you can talk English. Why you are an American yourself."

His eyes strayed around the room and came to rest on the Neph guards, and if ever I saw a man sick with fear

this was he. He must have thought he was any place but heaven, or else crazy.

"Who . . . who . . . are these people?" he asked.

"First," I said, "I would like to know how you found this place?"

"I don't know. I was exploring the *Cave de los Vientos*. I suddenly stepped off into nothingness, and the next thing I knew I was here. My name is Prindle. I . . ." He had fainted again.

I told Gori exactly what the man had told me, and they immediately took him to the laboratory. We were not invited to come in, but that man came out of the lab two hours later walking as though he had never been hurt. I didn't understand what a miracle had been wrought until Prindle himself told me that he had been an iron worker in the States and fifteen years before had gotten a steel sliver in his eye which had blinded him permanently. Now his sight was restored in that eye as if he had never had an injury.

Hours later he was given the test. A metal cap was on his head, and a light was shown on the top of that cap. Obviously he was asleep or hypnotised. Harji stood over him and spoke to him in a language I did not know. Prindle mumbled something. Then as the light grew stronger, spoke in the same tongue. Finally the light faded and Harji turning to the guards, gave a command. Prindle was carried out and I thought that was the last I had seen of him, but I believe I saw him in San Antonio, after I came up here.

I asked Mira what they had done with him, and she said, "He has been put to sleep; they have carried him to the surface and to about two miles distance from the entrance to the cave. All memory of his accidental fall into the cave and his experiences while here are erased from his mind. When he awakes he will not recall finding the

cave and will only have a burning desire to go back to his own country."

I thought no more of the incident nor did I have any reason to doubt her word, for the Nephli *do not lie*.

IT WAS several days later that Arsi,

Mira and I were on our way to the bathing canal, a stream of water crystal clear which runs through one of the corridors and which is designated for bathing only, when we came to the great elevator shaft, closed with great iron doors which I had seen many times before, but had never known the use of. Just then the ground trembled. There was a swishing noise as if a roman candle magnified a million times had gone off. Arsi, as usual, was carrying me, and I grabbed him with a death grip at that terrible sound. I have never seen him so amused. When he could control his mirth, "Don't be afraid, Maggie. That was only the yearly space ship leaving."

Then my bewildered expression, "that is the energy-driven ship that surface men will some day use to go to the stars." He added sadly, "Up and up he will go, not alone to the stars, but to the other sciences as well, until his arrogance and pride lead him to believe he can reach to Tamil, himself. Then; Maggie, Tamil in his wrath that man should try to assume the attributes of the supreme being, will destroy him and all his works and of the surface people leave only those who are humble and clean hearted. Shall I tell you what will happen then? The Nephli will come back to the surface, to their rightful heritage, and bring all their marvelous science to make the world a peaceful place to live in, a world of beauty where wars are no more. Then and only then will Tamil be fully revealed to us."

"But how," I asked, "can they get

through the earth crust without being seen?"

"Many have seen the light of a departing ship," he said, "and some have guessed what it might be, but none have been able, nor will they be able, to know from whence it leaves the underground."

Time passed rapidly, *too* rapidly for me, and the day came when my mentors told me that I would soon depart. Would I remember nothing of my stay with them?

Harji answered that query. "You," he said, "will remember everything. You will say nothing until the time is ripe. Then you will tell just what we tell you to say. The truth. From that truth you will tell you will find five of the undiluted blood of the Nephli, many who have a strain of Nephli mixed with surface who will eventually remember or who will dream and in dreams be shown their heritage. Tomorrow you will be taken to the Tamion and be present at the renewal of three of such things. That and the enlargement of these same beings will be the last of the marvels you will be shown before you go back."

THE next morning, or I should say, the end of sleep time, my friends took me to the room called Tamion. There I saw the three new, soon-to-be residents of Nephli land. There were two women and one man. The man looked like a German, the two women like Mexicans. I couldn't speak to them, for I had been cautioned not to. But judging from the expressions on their faces, they were very happy about the whole thing. We only stayed for a moment inside, long enough to see them lie down in front of a tall stone. At first glance the stone seemed to be a shaft of granite, but then I could see that a soft rosy glow made it nearly

transparent.

Sixteen hours later we went back, and those three who had entered old, wrinkled, gray, and worn, came forth, young, beautiful, strong. They were forthwith taken to another room, the enlarging room. I would say it was two hours they stayed there, and although I am not by nature a curious person, I was all agog with excitement, for I wished to be assured it was true that I would some time be able to do the same. It was true all right. When they came out they were as large as Arsi and Mira.¹⁰ I was sure, now, and my doubts were dissipated.

Hours later they came for me, Mira openly wept and even Arsi wore a sad expression. A brand new suitcase was placed in the torpedo. Mira, seeing my look, grinned.

"Surface clothes, Maggie. You didn't expect to go back in that robe did you?"

She handed me the black dress I had worn there. I disrobed and donned the dress and the slippers. I sure missed those soft sandals I had been wearing for so long.

As I was lifted into the torpedo, Harji came up, shook my hand and put a small package in it. "This little gift to you can be sold. The sum of money

¹⁰ Many of our readers object to Mr. Shaver's giants because they say that their lung surface would not be sufficient to supply their huge bodies with oxygen to live, nor would their bones support their weight. They all neglect to consider that their *density* might be less. As a rather unreal analogy, let's assume that you and your editor were suddenly only one-hundredth as dense as we are—say we were composed of "gases." Now, to us a chair also composed of "gases" would seem as solid as we, and we would be unable to say that we were not as "solid" as we were originally, nor that the chair was as solid. And yet, we would not be violating the "law" of physics which says these things about lungs and bones. Do we *know* that matter is always exactly as we have defined it in our present degree of "scientific enlightenment"? Perhaps this "enlarging" process means only in size, not in *mass*.—Ed.

it will bring will be enough to keep you until you find a way of making your living. You will be poor many times, but unseen we will guard you. Nothing can happen to you, of ill. Your course is mapped out for you, and twenty surface years from now you will return to us."

SOON we were at the same entrance where I had entered with Doc Kelmer. At a command from Arsi the door swung open. I passed through and turned around as Mira said, "Walk to that *casita* you see in the distance. Stay there two days, when one of ours will come for you. Adios and good luck."

Through tear-misted eyes I saw the door close. Then there was nothing to see but a clump of greenery. I walked as directed to the *casita* and was met by the Indian woman. She asked no questions, for she must have received instructions from Them. I stayed there till the evening of the second day, and I don't believe we exchanged a dozen words during that time and for some reason I didn't feel like talking either. Late that second evening a fine car drew up in front of the *casita*. I grabbed my suitcase and got in. The driver didn't believe in talking either, for even when I asked him if he knew where I was to be taken he only grunted. We arrived in Mexico City by daybreak and the car stopped on San Juan de Letran Street. Somehow I did not worry. I went directly to a friend of mine who had been very good to me and she nearly fainted when she saw me.

"Mag! Where in Heaven's name

have you been? Prison I suppose, but if you were it did you good, for you look twenty years younger."

"Never mind," I replied. "I want to know how much you will give me for this."

When I showed her the little gold begemmed box she threw a fit.

"Where did you get this?" Then as if she thought I had stolen it, "Maggie, you couldn't have. . . ."

"Stolen it?" I grinned. "No, it is true I can't be believed, but take my word for it. It is strictly honest."

She finally became convinced and gave me nine hundred and fifty pesos for it, although I know it was worth much more.¹¹ The exchange at that time was two for one, so I did nicely after I got here and at last started to work. Tamil has indeed watched me in more ways than one and taken care of me. I have been cajoled, tempted, even threatened, in an effort to make me tell what I know. It is futile. Now I shall look, as I have been doing for seventeen years, for the ones who have that trace of Neph blood in them. I have found the five. I have found a few of the mixed blood. I have a great many more to find, both of Neph blood and of surface who are worthy to be among those who will survive.

This is my story, a vindication of my friends, the Nephli, and a tribute to TAMIL.

¹¹ The box was sold to Alma Lewis, wife of an executive of the *Cia Luz y Fuerza* (Mexican Light and Power Company). Recent letters are unanswered, and there is a report that Alma Lewis has returned to England with her husband. Does anybody know of her whereabouts? We would like to see this box, or send a representative to see it. —Ed.

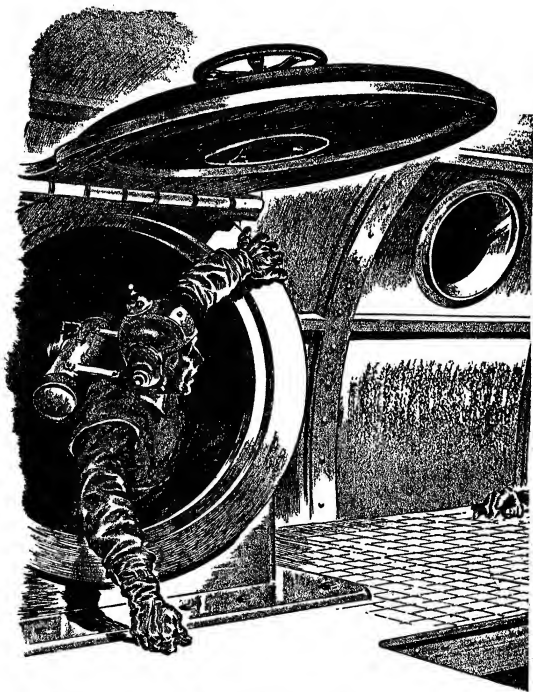


"BLABBERMOUTH"

By Theodore Sturgeon

ONE OF NEXT MONTH'S GREAT STORIES

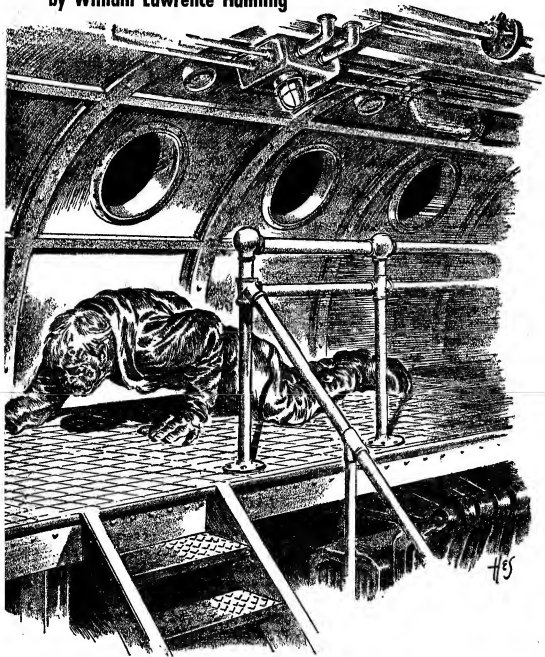




Youth lay in the radium content of the asteroid—but being made young again can be carried too far . . . even to the point of death!

Rejuvenation Asteroid

by William Lawrence Hamling



Barcole tried to crawl forward, but Ferber ran to the airlock and swung it shut in Barcole's face

ADAM BARCOLE paced nervously up and down beside the open airlock of the *Spaceward*. He was gaunt and hollowed. A stooped figure in his sixties. His face was deeply lined and wrinkled, and the hair, combed neatly back over his forehead was pure silver. His thoughts, as he walked, were a deep dark flow of music.

Hurry up, Jerry Ferber, I don't want you to miss this trip. I've waited a long time to get you out of the way. Hurry up, Jerry . . .

He rubbed his long lean fingers anxiously and continued to pace up and down. Up and down. Back and forth. And his thoughts flowed on.

Out in space it will be easy—accidents always happen. Besides, you have only a few short years anyway—those wracking coughs, flecks of blood on your lips, the fever burning in your eyes—

He chuckled to himself and rubbed his fingers again.

You have two feet in the grave already. You have cancer for a set of lungs. I'll be doing you a favor by killing you. Sandra could never be happy with you . . .

Two figures came out of a low sprawling building off to the left of the spaceship. Adam Barcole stopped his nervous pacing as he saw them approach. Behind them the sun gleamed on a bronze legend slanting upward from the roof of the building. It read: **THE BARCOLE RESEARCH LABORATORIES.**

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Dr. Barcole."

Jerry Ferber said the words with his eyes on the girl at his side. He was a tall youngish man in his early thirties, with bright feverish eyes, a drawn pallor on his face, and a barely discernible slump around his chest, marring an otherwise athletic body. He coughed

deeply and turned his head away. Then he looked back at the girl.

"I was just saying good-bye to Sandra. She still wants to go along."

The girl had a forced smile on her wide full lips. Her eyes were misty, with a faraway look in them, as if she were seeing things that brought sadness to her heart.

"You really ought to stay here on Earth, Jerry," she said. "Your health won't get any better on this wild search for a new element. If I were along I could take care of you . . ."

Barcole cleared his throat. "Nonsense, Sandra. He'll be all right. Besides, we won't be gone more than a week. I'll watch him. And you know that scientific expeditions have no place for women."

"I only know that Jerry is still sick and that I love him," she said stubbornly.

Barcole laughed. "You're just worried for the two of us—or am I presuming too much for an old man?"

A wistful smile crossed her face. "Of course, Doctor,—the two of you."

Jerry Ferber coughed deeply. A twitch of pain tugged at the corners of his mouth, but he had turned away. When the spasm passed he looked over at the spaceship.

"Everything all set, Doctor?"

Adam Barcole nodded.

"Then let's get going," Jerry said.

He didn't look back at the girl. Adam Barcole did. He looked for a long moment at the copper gold hair shining in the sunlight. At the misty blue eyes that watched them. The flowing lines of a youthful figure . . . all the things Adam Barcole wanted and only a sick younger man stood in his way of getting. He waved his hand at her.

THEY lifted effortlessly from Earth. The smooth atomics throbbed deep

in the hull of the ship. Adam Barcole stood beside Jerry Ferber at the control panel, watching.

"Are you sure we have enough lead on board, Doctor?" Jerry asked after a few moments. "I checked the emergency rocket car, but I didn't check the supply lists as long as you started them."

Barcole was looking out in the deepening blackness of space.

"Yes, there's enough lead on board for the atomics to get us out to Pluto and back. I also checked the new radiation screens. The outer lining is tough enough to stop any cosmic ray, and with the inner lining as backing, we have nothing to worry about."

I have nothing to worry about. But you have Jerry. You don't know it yet . . .

"I've got the course set for the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. Any changes as yet?" Jerry asked.

Barcole shook his head. "No. We won't be able to do much until after we pass Vesta. You checked the instruments back at the laboratory at the same time I did. All I know is that one of those asteroids, and it must be a new one in the belt otherwise we would have noticed the condition before, is giving out that radiation. After we get closer to the belt we'll be able to pick it out easier."

Jerry Ferber coughed harshly. He pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and dabbed at his lips. There was a slight film of red on the cloth.

"Have you any idea what we'll find, if anything?" Jerry asked, his voice strained as a spasm of pain caught at him.

Barcole watched the twisting of the younger man's lips. He didn't feel any pity. He felt glad. All of his youth had been spent in dark scientific laboratories, deep in study. He had lost track

of time as the years sped by, and then one day when he had decided that he wanted a little more out of life besides what he found in textbooks, he found he was too late. Time had crept up on him and he was old.

He had clutched at Sandra Brent as a dying man reaches out for the last straw of life. But Jerry Ferber had been there to step between them. Jerry Ferber, young, good-looking. And she had picked him, cancer and death along with him. She had a ready smile for Barcole, and it gnawed deep into his heart. There was more than a smile ready for Jerry Ferber. Adam Barcole wanted more than a smile too. With Jerry out of the way . . .

Jerry Ferber was looking at him. Barcole started and managed a grin. "Sorry, I was thinking. What did you say?"

Jerry coughed. "I just asked if you had any ideas about this radiation."

Barcole shrugged. "Right now, no. The rays are altogether different than cosmic rays. They don't register on the spectro-dials in any definite frequency. The only way I can explain it is in the presence of a new element."

"A new element," Jerry Ferber breathed the words. "That would mean fame, money, and a chance to do what you wanted most of all—wouldn't it?"

Barcole looked at him warily. "What do you mean?"

Ferber laughed. "It's funny, isn't it—my thinking about what I'd like to do. If there is a new element waiting out here in space to be discovered, I could marry Sandra, and maybe do something about my health."

"Oh." Barcole breathed. Thoughts surged through him. *I can do something about your health!*

THE ship sped on. It was a dot in the vastness of nothing stretching

out to eternity. Jerry Ferber alternated at the controls with Adam Barcole. Hours drifted into days. Mars flashed by and then ahead lay the Asteroids.

"We're getting pretty close," Jerry announced. "Have you got the detectors ready?"

Adam Barcole stood behind Jerry Ferber. "Yes I have everything in order," he said. He reached over and switched on a dial meter. There was a soft hum. Slowly a wavering needle began to trace a path across the face of the instrument. Barcole watched its movement tensely. Suddenly it stopped its movement. His eyes flickered from the figures over to the wall chart.

"Found it yet?" Ferber asked anxiously.

"I think so," Barcole replied slowly. "Wait a minute, I'll be right back. I want to check on something."

Jerry Ferber waited. He had nothing else to do. His eyes watched the Asteroid belt grow closer. Off to the left Vesta loomed, its 240 miles of space rock glimmering in reflected sunlight.

Hundreds of asteroids, thousands, spinning, careening through space. And somewhere in that mass of a solar system's rubble, Jerry Ferber knew, lay the chance he needed for success. The chance he wanted.

"Jerry."

The word came softly from behind Jerry Ferber. He turned questioningly. His face took on a startled expression. Then a look of confusion and bewilderment. Adam Barcole, his wrinkled features twisted into a leering grin, stood in the entrance of the control room, a proton pistol in his hand, leveled straight at Jerry Ferber's heart.

"What—Doctor,—what the hell . . ."

"Presently, Jerry. You're going there soon enough," Adam Barcole said smoothly, his voice charged with pentup

passion.

Ferber ran a hand shakily through his tousled hair. He coughed. "I don't understand—what is this all about?"

The smile left Barcole's face. It became cold, ancient, harsh.

"Of course you don't understand. You can't realize how I've wanted you out of the way for the past months, can you? You're young, attractive to young women—even with cancer!"

Jerry's eyes blazed. "I see. You're in love with Sandra."

"Yes. I'm in love with her. You can't understand that, can you? I'm old—ready to die any day! You'd like to see that happen, wouldn't you?"

"You're crazy!" Ferber snapped. "What ever gave you ideas like that? I never dreamed until now—"

"Don't worry, I may be old, but maybe not for long."

Jerry Ferber looked at him. There was something in the way he said it. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that I *do* have a theory about this new radiation we are tracing down. It is a theory I was almost afraid to advance, but I am almost sure of it now. Every instrument we have used checks to a maximum of power on this radiation. Haven't you ever stopped to wonder about this? Cosmic forces as we know them fluctuate in intensity, because *all known forces are products of destructive matter! What if there was a force that was not a result of disrupting matter, but a primal essence!*"

JERRY FERBER stared in amazement at the old scientist.

"You mean—"

"I mean that instruments don't lie! This new radiation is not a product of disrupting matter like the cosmic ray—it is something far beyond that, far beyond the reach of our known galaxy.

Have you ever heard of the Fountain of Youth?"

Jerry Ferber nodded slowly, his eyes wavering from the scientist's face to the gun he held steadily pointed at his heart.

"That is just a legend come down through the generations."

Barcole nodded eagerly. "Yes, it is just a legend built on the premise that there *was* such a force in the Universe that could *rejuvenate*! It was never found because all forces we know of are destructive in form—forces that tear down instead of rebuilding."

Ferber began to see. "And this new radiation—you actually believe it is just the opposite?"

Barcole shook his head vigorously. "I am almost positive of it. Cosmic rays are the result of disintegrating energy. This new radiation is a part of the *universal energy*—the building up of life, worlds, the universe itself!"

Ferber felt his heart pounding. He almost forgot about the gun that was pointed at him.

"But where did it come from?"

Barcole shrugged. "That is something we shall never know. The asteroid carrying this force must have been thrown from another galaxy in a cosmic upheaval. A galaxy where universal energy had not been expended like it has in our own."

"I see," Jerry Ferber breathed. "Granting that you are right, what do you expect to do with it?"

A harsh smile crossed the old man's face. "I plan to land on that asteroid. I plan to bathe myself in that radiation—to become young again—to have eternal youth!"

Ferber coughed in a wracking spasm. Flecks of red stood on his lips. "And me?" he gasped out.

"You!" Barcole sneered. "You are doomed to die anyway. I'm doing you

a favor by killing you. Nobody will ever know what happened to you. And Sandra will forget you ever existed. She doesn't love you—she only feels pity for you. Once I regain youth I'll marry her myself!"

Ferber started forward, his face writhing angrily.

"Stand still!" Barcole commanded. Ferber stopped, weaving nervously on his feet. "Turn around!" Barcole moved slowly forward.

Jerry Ferber turned. "You'll never get away with this, Barcole, you're a fool!"

He groaned as something smashed into the back of his head. Barcole lanced down viciously with the butt of the gun against Ferber's skull. The younger man slumped groaning to the floor.

Barcole stood over him breathing hard. His hands were shaking. The gun dropped to the floor of the control room with a hollow metal clang. Ferber didn't move.

Barcole stepped over the younger man and his hands played over the controls of the ship. His eyes watched the readings on the dials registering the radiations from the asteroid belt. He moved switches. The ship followed straight on a course for the center of the belt.

There was a feverish light in Adam Barcole's eyes as he turned and bent over Jerry Ferber. He lifted the younger man under the armpits and dragged him across the floor toward the door of the control room.

He was panting when he finally reached the refuse chute in the narrow companionway leading to the hold of the ship. He depressed a button on the wall and a narrow panel slid open.

"Into space, Ferber," he grunted. "You'll have a nice little orbit all your own from now on!"

He struggled with Ferber's inert form, lifting it from the floor of the companionway. The body weighed a ton it seemed. Finally he had Ferber's head pushed down into the refuse chute. He panted as he forced the rest of Ferber's body inside. It was a close fit, almost too close, but Barcole heard the body slither down.

He depressed the panel button on the wall and the chute opening sealed. Then he depressed the airlock mechanism for an instant. Just enough to let Ferber's body hurtle out into space.

He was trembling when he returned to the control room.

AS ASTEROIDS go, it was large. Delicate instruments manipulated by Adam Barcole's deft fingers computed the exact size at something under a hundred miles in diameter. It was a solid piece of rock—and something else. Something that the myriad dials, graphs, and vibrating needles refused to pattern into any known quantity. His eyes were eager as he watched it loom in the visiplat.

The *Spaceward* slowed. It moved around the asteroid in a wide circle. Adam Barcole gazed at it rapturously. All the instruments seemed to have gone wild. They registered at maximum strengths and seemed to be straining at forces beyond their ability to register.

A halo of shimmering light danced on the surface of the asteroid. It seemed to have substance, an aura of mass, of building, expanding force.

Adam Barcole felt his throat tighten in nervous twitches. His fingers trembled on the controls of the ship, guiding it closer, lower . . .

There was no sound as the ship landed on the asteroid. There was no atmosphere to carry sound. Barcole felt only a slight thud as the metal keel of the ship rested on the rocky surface.

His hands shook as he fitted himself into a space suit. He fumbled nervously with the glassite helmet, sealing it in place. Then there was a rush of cool air on his face from the shoulder oxygen cylinder.

He stepped into the airlock. He waited. The outer lock opened.

He stepped onto the barren surface.

He felt as light as a feather. He moved cautiously in the slight gravity of the asteroid. He walked around, peering intently through his glassite headpiece. There was nothing but rock. Tall spires of rock, gouging valleys of it. Hills, pits, cliffs, as far as he could see.

But there was something else.

He felt it. In the shimmering halo that hung over the asteroid, the aura that seeped over him, around him, *through* him, he felt it. It was unlike any sensation he had ever felt. His body seemed alive for the first time, every atom of his being tingled, throbbed, pulsed. His head felt racy. It was an ecstasy of joy, of well-being. Strength flowed in his veins. Strength he hadn't felt for years.

He glanced back at the ship. The halo had engulfed it too. And Adam Barcole laughed. Laughed unheard in his airtight spacesuit. With a springing step he made his way back to the ship.

His laughter, he knew, was youthful.

. . . He removed the spacesuit with eager, trembling hands. He dropped it to the floor of his cabin and stood there, almost afraid to move.

Mechanically his feet moved over the floor to the washstand beside his bunk. A large mirror hung on the wall over it. He looked.

There were no wrinkles. The face that looked out at him was young, smooth, the face of a young man!

There was no silver in his hair. It

was black, a deep wavy black. And his eyes. There was the feverish glint of youth in them. They were clear, unstinted. He looked down at his body.

He saw himself as he had been over thirty years back. He saw himself rejuvenated, his chest full, his shoulders square, his hands lean and strong.

He threw back his head and laughed. Wave upon wave of laughter.

"I'm young again! I'm young again! I was right—it is a primal force! The Universal Energy—the Fountain of Youth! And it's my discovery—I'll be famous, wealthy—and Sandra—"

His voice trailed off for an instant and the smile faded from his lean handsome face as he thought of Jerry Ferber.

"He had to die anyway . . ." he said to himself. He thought of Ferber floating in space, a new tiny asteroid in its own orbit, drifting with the dead lifeless hulks of planetary rocks. He shrugged his shoulders and thought again of Sandra. Sandra with the copper gold hair, the misty blue eyes, the trim youthful figure.

Sandra was his now. He had Jerry Ferber out of the way.

"I'm young again!" he said. "I'm coming back to you, Sandra!"

He hurried into the control room.

THE atomics throbbed in the bowels of the ship as the *Spaceward* hurtled toward Earth. Adam Barcole stood before the controls of the ship, a smile of eagerness on his youthful features.

He checked the dials. He was well on his way. Already the Asteroid Belt was far behind. Just a few days of flight to go.

. . . The hours passed. Barcole sat leisurely in the control room staring out into space. He took out a handkerchief and wiped his brow. It was warmer. He glanced at the thermostat. The temperature hadn't changed any. He

frowned.

. . . Barcole crawled out of his bunk the next morning. He was hot and dry. His tongue was parched, his lips cracked. He hurried into the control room, looked at the automatic pilot control. It was working perfectly. He looked anxiously at the thermostat. The temperature was constant.

He hurried back to his quarters and looked at himself in the mirror. His face was young, the same as yesterday. He breathed a sigh of relief. But there was a difference.

His skin was red. His eyes were feverish. He felt of his brow. It was hot, almost burning.

He drank water. More water than he had ever drunk before. But he was still thirsty. He opened his medicine cabinet. He downed a number of sulphadephrus tablets.

"Must have caught a hell of a fever somewhere . . ." he mumbled.

He went back into the control room and sat waiting for the medicine to take effect.

It didn't.

Then he noticed the air. It was different. It was charged, seemed almost as if it were *alive*. He looked again at the thermostat. It hadn't changed. He checked the instrument. It was working perfectly.

He noticed the sore breaking out on the back of his hand.

He looked at it in disbelief. It was a small red sore, no larger than his little finger nail. The skin had parted around it and a red pussy matter oozed out.

He frowned worriedly and hurried back into his cabin. He took his temperature. It was 102.

He swallowed a handful of the sulphadephrus tablets. He gave himself an intra-muscular injection of a stronger drug.

"That ought to do it," he muttered

anxiously.

It didn't.

He paced the length of the control room. Up and back. The air seemed hotter, almost afire. But the temperature was normal. His skin was parched and cracked. His clothes burned around the neck.

He took off his jacket and shirt. He looked down at his chest. Little red sores were breaking out on his skin. Matter was running from them, a slow, sluggish, burning matter.

He began to sweat in terror. It rolled down his parched forehead and evaporated. He felt a humming inside his head. A low crackling hum. He trembled in fear.

He ran from one instrument to the other. They all checked normal. But there was something wrong. The air—

The air!

He checked the atmosphere. Oxygen content normal. Nitrogen, hydrogen, and the other inert gases normal. In desperation he switched on the radiation indicator.

The needle jumped to maximum.

Barcole stared at it aghast. "My God!" he whispered. "The air is alive with radio-active rays!"

HE RAN to the protective screen gauges. The inner and outer screens were running at maximum. No cosmic radiation could get through.

But that was impossible! The air was alive with radio-activity! It had to come from space—

Or did it?

With burning, aching fingers he set instruments to work. He watched needles quiver, graphs record staggered red lines. And horror flooded his eyes.

The rays were coming from inside the ship!

He traced it down, slowly, definitely. And the word choked out of his swollen

mouth as he found it.

"Radium! Radium! It's coming from the atomics! But that's impossible—"

The atomics were powered with lead, he himself had loaded the fuel onboard. And there was no radium in lead. . . .

He stepped back from the instruments and laughed. A wild maniacal laughter that reverberated throughout the ship. For he suddenly knew the answer. The terrible, ghastly answer.

There was no radium in lead because radium disintegrates into lead—but lead rejuvenated becomes radium!

The Asteroid, the rejuvenation asteroid—he saw it now. The very universal energy, the building up of matter that had made him young again had also rejuvenated the bulky mass of the ship's fuel into its original form—that of radium!

He stood in the control room and felt the air charged with fire. He stripped the rest of the clothes from his body and saw the sores spreading. Tiny little red spots into large festered sores. Strength ebbed from him . . .

. . . He heard the noise dimly. It was a dull muffled pounding coming from outside the control room. He lifted his naked agonized body from the chair and painfully walked into the companionway. He listened.

It came again. The dull muffled pounding—from the walls of the ship itself, it seemed.

He gasped. The sounds were coming from the refuse chute—the identical chute he had shoved Jerry Ferber's body into!

With a trembling hand he depressed the panel slide. It opened. He stared in disbelief.

A HEAD came through the opening.

A tousled head that Adam Barcole knew. A body followed it. A body Adam Barcole had thought was long

ago frozen as solid as any of the rocks in space.

Jerry Ferber crawled through the chute and into the companionway.

He straightened his tall frame and looked at Adam Barcole. Horror flooded his eyes.

"My God! What's happened to you?"

Adam Barcole stared at him as if he were seeing an apparition. His puffed, swollen lips parted and words came thickly from his raw gaping mouth.

"You—it can't be you—you're dead—I threw you into—space—"

Ferber shook his head. "No you didn't Barcole. When my body hit the bottom of the chute it became wedged against the airlock. It didn't open when you pressed the release. I regained consciousness and—but *you!*"

Barcole babbled out what had happened. His voice grew thicker with each word and his body ran with festered matter. Ferber backed away from him.

"Radium—*radium!*" he exclaimed. "No wonder I feel different—do you realize what's happened to *me*, Barcole?"

Barcole stood moaning on his feet. Jerry Ferber laughed.

"You wanted to kill me, Barcole. You tried your best. And you nearly succeeded. *I was trapped between the inner and outer protective linings of the ship! Enough radio-active rays filtered through to cure my cancer but not poison me—look!*" He slapped his chest roughly and coughed. It was a healthy robust cough and there were no red flecks on his lips. He laughed. "Good Lord! The irony of it!"

The thing that was Adam Barcole raised its arm. Words mumbled thickly from the maw that had been a mouth.

"You—are—doomed with me—in a few—hours you will be—poisoned

too—"

Jerry Ferber shook his head.

"I'm sorry for you Barcole. You got the youth you wanted, and nearly had the success and power you wanted. But I won't be with you much longer. Have you forgotten about the emergency rocket car? If you had thought of it in time you might even have saved yourself! I'm leaving."

Barcole howled in agony. He lumbered forward on his rubbery legs and swung viciously at Ferber. But Ferber sidestepped him and ran down the companionway. Before Barcole could move his tortured body down the corridor, Ferber had operated an airlock. The panel slid shut in Barcole's face. Seconds later he heard the blast of a rocket.

The emergency ship had shot out into space.

JERRY FERBER looked through the viewplate in the tiny quarters of the rocket. He saw the silver form of the *Spaceward* fading away into space.

"So long, Barcole," he muttered and shook his head sadly. "I feel sorry for you."

He looked ahead into space. A luminous disk was large in the viewplate. Earth. Home.

"I'm coming home, Sandra, darling. Soon." he said.

* * *

The thing that was Adam Barcole crawled into the control room of the *Spaceward*. It moved across the floor and left a trail of festered matter behind it. A hand reached up and tried to control the course of the ship. The controls lurched and the hand slipped away, its strength gone.

The ship hurtled into the void. Into the trackless vista of space uncharted.

And the thing inside it, undying, lay whimpering on the floor.

THE SECRET OF



... fired a shot at the looming monster in the cave ...

SUTTER'S LAKE



by **DON WILCOX**

**Deep within Sutter's Lake
was a mystery that had to be
solved; or Walter Sutter would die**

WHEN a fellow gets into a double tangle with a shark and an octopus, all within his last five minutes of swimming for a bit of island, I'm here to tell the world he's lucky if he still has lungs to

gasp with.

The stars have to be on his side if he ever sets foot on terra firma. I'll guarantee the "terra" will stay with him a month, but if by that time he's feeling "firma"—with no damages except a

freak arm—it's a sure sign he's been living right, praying right, and cussing right.

It was the good fortune of Yours Truly, Walter Sutter, during this double diabolical water-battle to be armed with a chef's butcher knife. Otherwise I'd never have lived to contemplate the joys of relating this strange adventure to contemplated grandchildren.

The chef's butcher-knife was the one object I'd been able to grab when, some watery hours previously, Jap bullets had perforated our rubber raft and my comrades had gone down—but we'll skip that very unpleasant chapter, for my story properly begins when I reached the island.

Not that what I have to tell will be pleasant. It won't be, I give you warning.

When I was almost ashore, this surprise attack from the white-bellied death caught me—caught me so fatigued from the long swim and so engrossed in the race between my flagging energies and the remaining stretch of water that the response from my knife hand was much too slow. The beast got my left arm. He snapped it off clean above the elbow.

As he darted on, my blade cut a thin dark red line in his phantom whiteness. Then he was gone, and I was fighting on with an arm and a half—and a knife—and a pair of kicking legs that were presently weighted down by entangling ropes.

The ropes were tentacles, studded with suction cups. I was already in a panic. The knowledge that I would bleed to death in a matter of minutes was propelling me with all possible speed into the rocky shallows of the island.

But here was this damned devilfish bent on hitching a ride and being very impolite about it.

AS I LASHED out savage blows with my knife hand—my only hand!—my mind as well as my body went berserk. Strange that wild flashes of memories should leap into my head. But one's last moments, they say, are like that.

I was remembering something in Marcia's letters—her repeated warnings that she would never be able to endure it if I were lost in the Pacific—that she lived only for the wedding bells that would ring when I returned—that if I were ever wounded or lost at sea, she herself would come to my rescue.

To all of which I had written back a sarcastic oh-yeah. Just imagine her putting to sea in her father's ocean-going yacht and steaming into torpedo-streaked waters to look for me! Damn foolishness. She'd better sit tight in her cozy little twenty-thousand-dollar breakfast nook and read the funnies. As for me, if anything happened, let it happen. In time she'd find another boyfriend who could ice-skate and bowl and play tennis; probably with something less than my finesse, to be sure, but he'd learn to take my place in time.

I had gone so far as to imagine this mythical rival sitting in Marcia's darkened living room, holding her hand, while her father showed his favorite movies of their European travels and retold his yarns about that handsome young German officer who actually thought Marcia was going to fall in love with him.

Flash—flash—flash! The crests of one's thoughts fly past like sparks of light—and here I was, fighting my way to shore, with my severed arm burning like a torch, and this damned octopus dragging me down, opening his jaws—

Swish! I did it. I struck the nerve between his eye—a little knot of nerves the size of a pea—and at once his arms fell limp. Paralyzed, he dropped by

the wayside.

I dragged myself ashore, now in a panic for fear I'd already lost too much blood to be able to tend my wound.

I was vaguely aware that one of the slimy gray tentacles which I had severed from the body of the octopus was still clinging limply about my waist.

Consider what you would have done under the circumstances. This four-foot length of octopus arm had been sliced off by my knife. Its mucilaginous end was about the same diameter as my own luckless left arm.

I did what seemed the natural thing to do. I pressed the end of the octopus arm tight against the end of my half arm. At once the bleeding subsided.

With strips of clothing I succeeded in binding the octopus tentacle in place. A very crude job it was, performed as I fought off spells of fainting. . . .

I remember that I was lying on the sand within a few feet of the slapping waters as sleep engulfed me. The afternoon sun was sinking. I had the sensation of sinking with it, and I wondered if I would ever awaken. . . .

CHAPTER II

Walter Sutter's Island

MANY days later I knew that I would live—and deep within my heart I felt grateful to the powers of Nature that had come to my rescue.

A sort of Robinson Crusoe existence had been my lot from my first awakening, and there was a novelty and an interest about it that I didn't mind. Hour by hour I reassured myself that a Navy rescue party would pick me up in a day or two.

In the meantime, crippling along with the utmost of care so as not to disturb my healing arm, I made a few excursions around the island.

It was shaped like a cone, naturally enough, for that was exactly what it was—the top of an undersea volcanic mountain. Islands of this sort, I realized, continually came and went in the Pacific. My first happy thought was that I was the discoverer and the only human inhabitant.

But I was all wrong on this theory. Japanese fishermen had already taken the spot over—maybe ten years or more—earlier. Three little Japanese huts with curved roofs stood in the edge of the wooded north slope of the volcanic cone. They were primitive in construction, not built to offer much comfort from a storm. But they were far enough above the shore line that the highest waves of those first weeks couldn't reach them.

I was tempted to make one of them my temporary home. However, the nights were warm; sleeping under the stars was good; the whole island was mine. I decided not to confine myself within the walls of any Jap-built shack.

Besides, was there not a chance that Japanese fishermen might return on some dark night?

There was plain evidence in one of the little houses—the largest and best constructed of the three—that a bit of modern Japan had invaded these fishermen's quarters not many months ago.

New bright metal—with a military gleam, I thought, though this was only a guess. It was, to all appearances, a new steel door that must have led to another room—or perhaps a cave.

From the outside nothing of this hidden room could be seen, for the upward slope of the mountainside obscured the rear wall of the hut.

From the inside this door in the rear wall was certainly the most conspicuous thing in the house; and the most tantalizing thing about the door was the big, fat padlock that kept me from look-

ing in.

I sauntered out into the thickets and gathered some ripe berries and asked myself some over-ripe questions.

If Japanese fishermen had turned this island over to the Japanese military machine, what had happened to said military machine?

If the Jap army had started to stock this place with supplies, why hadn't they left some soldiers on guard?

If that steel door with the padlock was all that stood between me and some secrets cached in the mountain-side, how soon could I break through?

If this island contained anything whatsoever of value, why shouldn't I proceed to claim the island in the name of the Allied Nations and appropriate its treasures to the support of its standing army whose name was Walter Sutter?

I FOUND a can half-filled with red lacquer among the abandoned junk in the steel-door hut and proceeded to make everything legal.

"Sutter's Island" was the first sign I painted, and I set it up with stones on the shore below the three huts.

Toward the east end where the two arms of the pear-shaped island curved around in horseshoe style, I posted a three-foot billboard, "Sutter's Bay."

Later I took a fancy to a spot up in the middle of the horseshoe where a cliff of solidified lava in various fantastic shapes overhung the water. There was a lava camel with three humps and a head turned backward. Camel Point, I called it, and it became a lookout post for me. So I put another sign up there to keep me company.

"Sutter's Lake"—it said—and believe it or not, what it referred to was that cozy little patch of blue that spread as far as the eye could see, otherwise known as the Pacific Ocean. Later,

ironically, it was to have another meaning—but I couldn't foresee that.

The octopus arm was still with me through all these comings and goings. I felt a genuine affection for it, naturally enough, for it had unquestionably saved my life.

It was somewhat cumbersome to carry around, its four-foot length being added to the length of my upper arm. However, for some time I had employed the convenient device of a strap from my neck and shoulder, upon which its weight depended. Thus the wound was being allowed to heal with as little strain and disturbance as possible.

As the healing went on I was troubled to find that the octopus arm showed no signs of dropping off. It clung as if it belonged.

I tried to ignore the prolonged attachment of this foreign body. I felt certain that with time and healing I could lose it without resorting to the chef's butcher-knife.

But one day as I was running into the thickets on the north slope to avoid being seen by some passing Zeros, a very strange thing happened.

It happened when the supporting strap from my shoulder broke. The weight of the octopus arm didn't fall. Instead, the thing wrapped itself comfortably over my shoulder and clung.

Then I knew. In this action it had responded to my will. A series of nerves had found their way into it from my upper arm during the weeks of healing. *Every inch of that curving tentacle was a part of my arm now.*

CHAPTER III

Bombs and Biscuits

HOURS at a time I would lie in the sand at the shore's edge and allow my left arm to wave languidly in the

cool waters.

My bare toes dug idly into the sand. The leather belt of my ragged trousers pressed lightly at my hips. In my hand a canteen of fresh water—I required both kinds now, salt and fresh. The left arm was not at home in the fresh water from the spring.

It was a very lazy, easy life, and if I could avoid thinking, it was not painful. But when I would brood over what had happened, I would find myself quietly going mad.

The smell of the sultry sea became a part of me. New nerves for old. New thoughts for old. New conceptions of the vastness of time and space, and the immensity of a world of emptiness.

Meanwhile, strange things were happening to me.

This left arm with its suction cups was sharpening my sense of touch, of knowing things from the feel of things. I began to exercise an instinctive play toward small shells and sea life that would be tempting to an octopus. I fried and ate these, and my taste for them increased.

I watched with interest the growing responsiveness of this arm to my own will. I could make it bend about; I could make it seize things. I could force it to retreat (though it did so reluctantly) from the water. Dry sand was somewhat painful and repulsive to its touch.

The days were long, and no rescue ship came. Jap planes rarely passed overhead.

The nights were full of troubled sleep. I would wake to the roar of the waves and the wind, struck by some crazy fancy that I was hearing the music floating across from some distant shore. Sometimes it was a long forgotten symphony. Sometimes it was the once familiar boogie band at Henry's Tavern.

On calm nights when everything was thick with a black fog, there would be voices chanting, laughing, talking. Was this a form of desert madness?

Vividly bits of far-away conversations would come back to me. I would recognize them as conversations I had once participated in. Mystical groups of old friends rehearsed the lines they had spoken years ago.

Marcia's father would repeat his same funny stories as he discussed the movies he had taken in pre-war Europe. He would lift a comical eyebrow at her as he alluded to one Adolf Kuntz, the young Nazi who had tried to fall in love with her.

And Marcia, bless her heart, would say, "Don't worry, father. Walter will never let any Nazi get me." And she would pat my uniformed shoulder proudly.

Then old conversations would re-echo—with this difference: This time the right answers would come to my lips. I would say the things I might have said years ago. Strange that all this deep, dead, never-to-be-repeated past should come back to life in this God-forsaken corner of the world.

I WOULD half awaken to find myself in a cold sweat. I would start to mop my forehead, and that devilish left arm would sweep down across my face. I would recoil from my own touch, and come bolt upright, too wide awake to fall asleep again until the softening first light of dawn.

"No one will ever find me here," I began telling myself. "No one will ever come—and I'm glad. I'll live on in this monstrous form, and never be seen or known by man. That's the easiest way . . . the line of least resistance."

You may well imagine that one of the most fascinating features about this island was the crater of the volcano.

You may have guessed that by this time I had explored every foot of the cone. Your guess is wrong. I hadn't even once ascended to the summit.

Why not?

Well, I can only answer by comparing myself with the small boy who was told that there wouldn't be another Christmas for a whole year; his supply of gifts would have to last him a long, long time. So, upon thinking the matter over, he decided he wouldn't unwrap them all at once but would save some for a rainy day the next summer.

Before I had been tramping around on this island a month I had started up the cone at least a dozen times. Each time I had stopped and turned off in another direction with that thought. I might be here for a long, long time. What this island offered in the way of novelty had best not be consumed in a few quick gulps.

No; the crater could wait. Sometime, on some special occasion. Perhaps after I'd succeeded in catching that big green alligator gar—or whatever kind of mammoth fish it was that made his U-turns in Sutter's Bay, I'd go on an exploring spree and treat myself to a first look down the mouth of the volcano.

I wish I had started keeping track of time. Those first days or weeks that I slept away while recovering from my wound got me off to a bad start. Nevertheless, I did make a few score whacks in a dead log near the shore, one for each day. I kept it up until a storm came up and washed the log away. Then I cursed myself for my carelessness. Sad to say, there was little of the methodical Robinson Crusoe in my blood.

The cavern beneath Camel Point gradually became my home. It was nearer my source of food; it was well hidden within the inner curve of the

horseshoe-shaped bay. My fires could not be seen from the shore. My sleep, I was confident, would not be disturbed by any wandering Jap fishermen; and last, but not least, I had come to enjoy a certain companionship with the low groanings and rumblings of the volcano as it echoed up through the stone floor. To sleep with one's ear to the ground, to hear the low, whispered, sullen mutterings of Mom Earth's pent-up powers—it was much like the friendly feeling some people have for the voice of thunder or the roar of a pet lion in a good stout cage.

I hoped that my volcano was in a good tight cage. But I doubted it. For many days I had wondered why this island had been deserted by the Japanese. Suddenly the answer came, as clear as day. They had read some unpleasant warnings in the coil of smoke above the volcano cone.

I worked at the locked door from time to time, and one day the padlock fell off for me and I swung open the steel panel.

What a combination! Biscuits and bombs!

This was an occasion for a feast and a celebration.

CHAPTER IV

Not According to Movie

I TOOK an inventory of the packages of food concentrates and estimated that, barring a host of visitors, such as the Japanese army, I could guarantee that there would be three square meals a day on Sutter's Island for the next sixty-two thousand days. Roughly, one hundred and seventy years.

This was momentarily disheartening, to realize that I could never hope to encompass all that food. I half wished that Aunt Minnie and all her kids would

drop in for a prolonged visit. What that wouldn't do to a food surplus!

This break was certainly not according to the movies. If my memory served me, I should have exhausted all the roots and berries on this desert island by the end of reel one; and if I found a cache of food in reel three, I should have had to weigh it in rations of ounces, so that by reel seven I would again be gnawing the bark of trees when the rescue ship hove in.

Food for one hundred and seventy years. That was discouraging. I sure as hell wasn't going to play Robinson Crusoe that long.

In addition, I now possessed enough bandages and first-aid equipment to take care of a minor accident a day and a couple of majors over every week-end for the rest of my natural life. This was awful.

There was, I may add in all seriousness, a detail in connection with this first-aid equipment which really made my blood boil, as it would have any American's. The goods bore a label which indicated that it had originally been sent to Japan from the United States some years before the war at a time of a disastrous earthquake. Our gift of mercy to unfortunate Japanese had been saved, then, for use by the Jap war machine, plotting its secret attacks.

Finally there were these stores of satin gray Jap time-bombs, the like of which I had seen before not so many months ago. Enough of these to provide fireworks for many a Christmas, Fourth of July and Hallowe'en—not to mention a lifetime of birthdays if I cared to reestablish my calendar by guess.

The supply of food was a tough psychological break, as I have explained; but all in all I took my discovery to be a very fine stroke of

fortune. I celebrated.

I celebrated with a climb to the summit of the mountain and looked down into the fire and brimstone crater, and listened to the more or less friendly rumbling and sputtering.

My meddlesome left arm had wrapped itself around a couple of time-bombs before I'd closed the door on my new treasure down the mountainside. So now, for the hell of it, I set them for thirty seconds and tossed them into the pit to see if they'd blow the cap off and catapult me into the ocean.

No such luck. They popped off with a couple of modest booms, and nothing happened. The dark column of volcano smoke continued to flow upward undisturbed. It was a cinch this was no well-trained movie volcano.

THE crater was quite small, I judged, not by movie standards but by what I'd read of such things. It was only sixty or seventy yards across, and so comparatively young in years, along with the rest of the island. (I had counted eighteen growth rings in the trunk of one of the larger trees not far from the three houses.)

The fire blazed near enough to the top in the western corner of the crater that that portion of the rocky lip remained red hot. Here again I was guaranteed an endless supply of fire if I should grow careless and allow the hot coals in my cave to burn out.

I descended the mountain with my nostrils well filled with lava smoke and my heart contented over what I'd seen.

I feasted on food concentrates for the next three days—I mean gorged—and was sick for the next three weeks.

The food was appreciated, however, by that big bumptious fish, the grayish monster with the green pennant fins who looked like an overgrown alligator gar from the Mississippi and who

frequently nosed into my bay from the ocean to do his U-turns. He went for the jawbreaker biscuits I tossed him and came back the next day to beg for more.

As for my own diet, I returned to the delights of crustaceans, and now and then for Sunday dinner I'd enjoy such delicacies as boiled octopus arms.

Does this seem to you, as it did to me, that this might be a sort of cannibalistic tendency? I've heard that an octopus will, in a pinch, devour his own arms. A sordid thought. I hasten to assure the reader that it was not my own arm that I ate. Nor did said arm recoil or otherwise betray any twinges of conscience as I feasted. Before the war, octopus meat ranked high among the foods of the gourmets of fashionable Mediterranean cities, as you've doubtless read. And so it pleased me thus to live in style.

By this time you have pictured me as a lazy, unambitious, half-melancholy creature, half naked, wearing an octopus tentacle for a left arm; completely devoid of any purpose; a slightly crazed castaway out of touch with the world and its wars and its commerce and its cultural progress.

You are quite right. A life of ease and indolence had been dumped into my lap. I came to accept as a fact that I would remain right here, alone and uncontacted by people to the end of my days.

The months passed. Months—yes, seasons. Wars may have come and gone. And Marcia—

WELL, there were still those dreams of music and voices—echoes of long forgotten sounds. But I ceased to think of Marcia as anything more than a dream. Farther and farther away.

"Walter Sutter is lost," she had said to some strange man in one of my

dreams. "He will never return . . . There, my tears are dried now . . . Yes, I will go to dinner with you . . . What, a ring? . . . An engagement ring? . . . Later, perhaps . . . We'll talk of it later."

This somewhat disillusioning dream out of my troubled subconscious I accepted as truth—as a natural development following my failure to return. I took it complacently.

I was even complacent over the growing underground thunder of the volcano.

There, again, I had the Hollywood myth to support me. No self-respecting volcano would ever think of popping off until some big dramatic moment was at hand, preferably after the wrath of the gods had been stirred to a white heat because some villainous white man had kicked the sacred taboos into the dust. Once hell broke loose, no mad volcano could be expected to quiet down until treated to a feast of the native princess' tender young body parboiled in lava sauce.

"Walter Sutter, you're as safe as those sleepy snails crawling over your bare feet," I said to myself. "This island has no native gods, and if it did have, there wouldn't be a thing in the world for them to get sore about, because there's sure as the devil no taboos around here. And no native princesses, darn it."

So I was complacent.

And so the volcano went to work one cloudy day and blasted forth a goodly quantity of hell, and caught me unawares.

I had by this time moved about three-fourths of the Jap time-bombs from their cache to my cozy cavern at Camel Point. When the uproar began my first thought was, "Time-bombs! There goes the last of them!"

In this first gasp of excitement I was

accusing my careless left arm of having mishandled a trigger. Those suction cups had a native cunning for getting into mischief, and I'd had to keep an eye on them during all those delicate bomb-carting maneuvers.

But before this roar got well started I knew it wasn't the mountainside cache, not my Camel Point cavern, but the big cone itself.

It was all wrong, according to the movies. But this volcano had grown up under Japanese influence, and maybe it couldn't help doing the wrong thing at the wrong time. Anyhow, the way it spouted off, a Tokyo propaganda broadcast would have been a two-cent firecracker by comparison. I flung my left arm over my back and raced for Sutter's Bay.

CHAPTER V

Lava Burial

LAVA and white-hot rocks came pounding down in my direction. Thunder and lightning and a hail of smaller rocks and a storm of volcanic steam at once transformed the whole scene around me into a terrifying spectacle.

I was caught among rocks, trapped there. The big, brownish red ledge that I had ducked under for momentary protection was sinking slowly. Sinking under the weight of an avalanche of rock that rushed down over the top of it.

Camel Point was a stone's toss beyond me, but the reversed head of the multi-humped camel had cracked off with the first explosion. My cave of explosive treasures, a few feet farther down, would doubtless be cut off from the world with the next wave of lava.

Here it came, a great, hot layer like a giant blanket of yellow dough, inching

its way, giving off steam and a crackle of sputtering noises, as if being poured out of hell's oven. It weighed above my head with its massive folds, and the smell fairly choked me.

I was caught by both feet. The rocks closed in against my knees. Suddenly the section of the cliff that had been sinking shook loose and plunged forward. For an instant I was thrown free into the water of the bay—free in the same sense that one is thrown momentarily free from his seat in a roller coaster. The cliff descended into the water with me. Then the vise of rock closed upon me again. Rock and water were everywhere around me—except for the slight cushioning of a live octopus which had, by chance, been hurled upward into this same trap.

More arms than my own were being crushed against my body. The octopus, too, was fighting for dear life.

Fortunately for me, or so I thought, the parrot-like jaws of this tentacled monster were away from me; otherwise I might have been cut through. Except for the tightening squeeze of its arms, I was thankful for it, for it cushioned my backbone against the rocks.

But life could not last long, I was sure. The rocks were pressing tighter, the whole ledge was sinking, the great fold of sputtering, hissing lava was sagging lower, lower, inch by inch, stiffening into rock as it came on.

My consciousness wavered.

If I could only breathe—if I could only breathe *water*! A strange last thought. But in those awful moments I was a torrent of wild and uncontrollable impulses, a trapped beast unable to fight against death. What slight relief I got in those darkening moments came to me, strangely enough, through my tentacled arm. Although torn and bleeding, it had taken root upon a wound in the body of the octopus, and

suddenly I knew that blood was flowing from that creature into me. The transfusion was bringing me new oxygen—oxygen that the octopus was able to inhale from the water.

We were submerged now, and the hiss and roar of the angry world dulled in my ears. Blackness . . . blackness . . . a faint that would not be staved off . . . One last thrust of my head in a fight for a gasp of that lava-stenched air. Then my body went cold under the choking of rocks and tentacles, and I was out, out with the certainty that this was death. . . .

CHAPTER VI

I Take Up Arms

I WAS hungry. Hunger pangs were the first dizzy sensation that returned to me. Somehow I knew that much time had passed since sleep had engulfed me. The blur of what had happened held over me. As my eyes began to see, dimly, through the foggy gray waters, I realized that my many arms were working. I was groping along the water-filled crags searching for shells.

Three of my arms were moving me along slowly. The funnel at my neck would push a little of the surrounding water away to propel me forward.

Presently one of my tentacled arms fastened itself upon a creeping shell. Up to my head it came, and my tight jaws opened. Whatever it was that lived in that shell was quickly killed from the poison I spewed upon it from my saliva. Then I ate the creature—it and two more—and the gnawing hunger within my body was gone.

My body was stiff and sore and sick, and so I made myself comfortable among the rocks a few feet below the surface and went back to sleep.

Sleep beneath the water—and the strangest dreams—This was not death! Not death! This was a transformation to a new life—

My new body was becoming less painful, more limber.

The waves swept gently against the graceful curves of my arms. The wet sand was good to the touch. My new instinctive desires claimed these watery caverns for home.

What a gorgeous new world, with white sand sifting along the ocean floor, and sea fans of purple and orange waving as if in a breeze! My fine new eyes were seeing everything now—the bright angel fish that hovered like painted leaves, the wily eels poking their heads out of holes in the rocks, the myriad tiny transparent fish standing in schools trying to hide themselves against the brown rocks.

This was my new world. I was at home. The hidden gills beneath my mantle breathed freely. I was confident—yes, wary, and highly charged with an instinct for dangers—but as confident as if this corner of the ocean were all mine.

The illusion was short-lived. My old friend and biscuit-eater, the alligator gar, shot into view, and all these various smaller fellows who had been respectfully timid at my approach were put in a panic.

The alligator fish gave me the cynic's eye as he darted away, and I detected enough arrogance in his manner to know he had no fear of creatures such as I.

THAT set me to thinking—I *could* think, in about the same way as always, I was happy to note. Or was there a difference in my thinking, now that I was an octopus?

I still thought as a man. The chief difference was that I was in one devil-

fish of a situation.

It was somewhat alarming to realize that I had not completely escaped an uncomfortable past. I could still recall that there was—or had been—a war; that I was within the range of Japanese fishing boats; that I was, in short, a human mind in the body of an octopus. Although I could still appreciate the value of money or a good book, my wants and desires and hopes and objects of interest were fast being shifted under the impact of a new set of instincts contained in this wriggling, water-loving new form of mine.

Persuading myself that this new life was delightful and satisfying was a tough assignment. I was an octopus. I could like it. Or I could resent it. To make things easier I fed myself some powerful propaganda to sell my physical self to my mental self.

And part of the time it worked.

Imagine my creeping along through the water on three or four arms, winking my big eyes at the bright angel fish who thought they were smart because they could stay out of my reach. And all the time I'd be talking to myself.

"This body is all right. This body will do. This body is mine. I'm comfortable in it. No one will ever find me. They may visit. They may search. I am hidden."

As if I could make a lie the truth by repeating it a hundred thousand times.

"These crabs and fishes are my world. I no longer belong to the race of men. Why wasn't I killed by the volcano? Because some strange power hidden within the mysteries of Nature came to my rescue and saved my life in the only way possible—by compressing my body into the casing of the octopus. This is Nature's mercy that has kept me from death."

These grompings for reasons and for

hope where there were neither partially succeeded in keeping my spirits afloat during fifteen or eighteen lonely months that followed. However, eventually, the novelty of this life was to wear off and my propaganda was to lose its charm. When that time came, all that remained for this octopus was to commit suicide.

CHAPTER VII

A Blade Between My Eyes

LONG before my decision to commit the first octopus suicide on record, I constructed certain fanciful symbols that any psychologist would interpret as an expression of my intense desire to return to the ways of man and his civilization.

Exhibit A will serve as a sample of the symbolical activities: I built a model city of sand and rock.

No octopus could have gone to more pains than I—and of course I had no help from any other octopus. The others of my breed were out hunting. Night was our hunting time. But we were not a social breed, and we avoided each other's company. I had seen to it that no others of my kind drifted into Sutter's Lake. This place was mine. And so I whiled away two or three weeks building a city of rocks and sand.

It looked like a city.

To lie at a distance with my head leaning close to the surface of the beach, to see the moon rising behind it, I had all the feeling of seeing the skyline of a far-off city.

Even to a few lighted windows in the tall buildings—for I had built in a few hollow reeds that would let the little shafts of moonlight shine through.

Three events must be recorded from those first eighteen months following

my conversion into the form of an octopus.

The first of these was another volcanic eruption which came without warning in the middle of a pitch-black night. The shock of the explosion intruded upon such heavy sleep that I went through the whole violent storm without waking.

It happened that a state of exhaustion was upon me from a long day of practice swimming. (I had determined that an octopus *could* learn to use its eight arms in rhythmic swimming strokes, though by and large we beasts were content to flounder along, depending upon our funnels for locomotion.)

The disturbing noises and the violent shaking of the earth and splashing of water around my arms failed to shake me into consciousness; but I dreamed that the volcano was erupting and that it would bring me death this time unless I ran; and so I ran. Yes, in this dream-turned-nightmare I sprang up with a push from my *two hands* and raced across the beach on my *two feet*, and finally stumbled and fell over my city of sand and rocks.

And there I lay until my dream carried me on into the black oblivion of sleep.

WHEN I awoke the following forenoon, I paddled along the shoreline with my tentacles, and suddenly I began to make discoveries. That volcanic eruption had been no dream: there were new folds of lava and new heaps of rock all about me. The sign "Sutter's Lake" now had a new meaning. The bay had been closed off from the ocean. The two arms of the horse-shoe had joined to form a complete lake within my island.

Further discoveries came hourly and daily for some time after this small but eventful eruption. I found that my old

cave, whose opening had been almost obscured by the earlier volcanic action, had now been reopened. Part of its floor level had sunk beneath the water. This was a welcome change, in consideration of my preference for water. It was now an octopus' paradise, and a perfect trap for my favorite foods.

The stacks of time-bombs in my cave, incidentally, had never been disturbed by any of these shocks; but they no longer bore any more interest for me than if they had been so much riprap. An octopus could have no use for time-bombs.

Further exploring at the oceanward end of the lake revealed that there were still open passages beneath the newly formed bridge of stone, which led out to the great waters beyond. They were passages beneath the water level, and right away my bumptious old friend and rival, the sixteen-foot alligator-mouthed fish with the green pennant fins, began to make use of these passages.

Was he surprised that morning when I, an octopus, tossed him a couple of hardtack biscuits from my cave! He eyed me with a curiosity and a respect, the like of which I hadn't seen since my change.

But of all the discoveries following upon the heels of this volcanic action, the most disturbing and mystifying was that of some *human foot tracks*.

I found these barefoot tracks on the beach, cutting a line straight from my habitual octopus sleeping-quarters in the shore rocks, across the sand to my little model city. There they showed unmistakable signs of having stumbled. There were prints of elbows and a hand where the human form had fallen.

From there on, back toward the water's edge, over hard-packed sand, there were hints of further tracks that were too dim to convey any definite impressions.

I searched the shoreline as rapidly as my eight-armed body would get around, thinking that I might catch evidence of a human visitor.

I found no such evidence. And all the while I kept pondering on the strange nightmare in which my own action fit the tracks so perfectly. . . .

Some months later came the second of the most impressive three events during my first year and a half as an octopus.

On a hot summer day came three small boats of Japanese fishermen. The boat made a startling catch just off my shore. It almost capsized as the fishermen struggled to land their netload. Finally they gave up and dragged it after them all the way to my beach, where they pulled it up on the shore—all to the tune of much excited jabbering.

From their gestures I guessed that they were content to idle a few hours here on the island while they waited for the wind to change.

They knew their way to the three houses; some of them rested there, while a few others ventured up the mountain for a look at the crater.

MEANWHILE no moss grew on my arms. I crept along through the water just beneath the surface, and when I approached the well loaded net, which was flopping around helplessly, sure enough it was my old friend, the alligator gar.

I hadn't brought my chef's butcher knife along for nothing. It was a rather long chance, my crawling up over the dry sand to the saplings where the net had been tied. It wasn't easy, either, and I knew how a fish out of water must feel.

Mr. Monster Fish looked very much terrified, and sad, too, with his flat alligator nose smeared with sand and one

of his green fins knotted up in the net.

I went to work at once. He recognized me, all right, and it was a good thing, for a little non-cooperation on his part could have queered the rescue. Once or twice he injudiciously eyed my left arm with what was distinctly a hungry look. But he controlled himself. In a matter of three or four minutes I had him out.

He needed no further hint, once he was freed. He flopped straight for the water with no more lost motions than a ship slides down after a kiss of champagne and glass. But once he struck the safety of the deep, he waited, to my great joy, and with that fine spirit of appreciation that some poets attribute more freely to animals than to men, he allowed me to mount his back and gave me a free ride to my cave.

This was the clinching of a friendship that was to mean much to a sentimental octopus like the erstwhile Walter Sutter.

The excited noise of the Jap fishermen when they had first landed this big fellow was a mouse's whisper compared to the tumult they set up when they found that he had been cut away. They turned savage on the spot and went on the warpath and searched the island for trouble.

One of them was a bit too adventurous and found his way down the rocky lake-shore to a point within twenty yards of my cave. He might have gone on and found the cave, but I reached up out of the water and grabbed him by the ankle and jerked him in. He gave such a wild squeal that the little snails avoided that corner of the lake for days afterward. I let him go, and he scrambled for shore in a panic. I sat in the water and laughed up my eight sleeves until the three boatloads of them pushed off for home.

The third event, about six months

later, was accompanied by quite a different mood. This was the cumulative crisis of my octopus life, the mounting despondency, the invisible winds that were causing me to drift toward suicide.

When the mood seized me this time I knew there was no hope.

I tossed enough biscuits to the alligator gar to guarantee that he wouldn't come back for three or four days. I placed some more in a pocket in the rocks just above the water line that he might find later.

Then I crept to my cave. One of my tentacles closed over the chef's butcher-knife.

I moved along through the water. Fish darted out of my path, and shells crowded into the watery crannies of colored stone to escape my eyes. Then they peeked at me, surprised that I didn't seize them to make my morning feast.

"What's the matter with that mean old devilfish?" they seemed to be saying. "He must have an awful grouch on."

I moved along the W-shaped coves and came up to the surface. The knife had rusted. I went to work to sharpen it on a fine sandstone rock.

The moonlight came, and it was beautiful, with thin clouds skimming over, making fleecy pictures of fantastic forms. This night I would have to watch through, as a last full draught of beauty.

WHEN dawn came, I glanced into the glassy water, and saw myself, ugly form that I was. The horror of such a creature as I, thinking in terms of beauty and loneliness and lost hope, was bitter irony. I would dispatch myself.

In the clear reflection I could guess the exact point between my eyes where the sensitive little round bundle of

nerves could be struck to put the coiling and twisting of my whole body to a sudden end.

I fastened the knife with the greatest of care. A niche in the rocks only a few inches above the level of the floor of dry sand seemed the most accommodating spot.

Once it was made secure I found that the level was too low for convenience. My locomotion above the surface was very clumsy and painful. There were my old human traits again, making for inefficiency. I should have found a niche under water in the first place.

However, this trifling annoyance led me to wonder whether I was not trying to back out of my decision. It is well known that most persons who find pleasure in planning some desperate action will find the best of excuses for postponing and finally avoiding it when the time for a showdown comes.

I told myself that I was determined. I had thought out all the logical consequences of a long, bitter lifetime of dwelling in this octopus body. I could foresee that never again would there be any interest in life for me.

By turning my head so that the line between my eyes was vertical instead of horizontal, I found that I could fit the key nerves precisely to the point of the knife.

Holding my head sidewise, then, I moved back a little distance from the blade, and tried to make what might loosely be called a run for it.

This combination of arms, or more properly legs, was not as practiced as my "under" ones. I found it necessary to make several "runs" toward the blade as trials, to be sure I could approach it with enough speed to effect my death when I struck.

At best I would be constrained to hurl my weight forward and continue the thrust from the tips of my tentacles

to make sure the point penetrated.

Like an athlete snatching a brief rest before the final contest, I paused for a few moments, now that I had put myself through the final paces. I allowed my sac-like body to drop into relaxation against the warm, gritty sand.

My head, still on its side, lopped downward. I allowed my eyes to relax in a long, last gaze at the steamy mirror of ocean. What a long horizon the ocean offers, when one turns his head on the side and sees it as an endless vertical line. It disappears above your eyes, so to speak; it likewise goes out of sight before your eyes. A long, straight, unbroken line—

Unbroken it was—not quite. At this particular moment it chanced to be sliced through by the dark hull of a ship. The prow was cutting this way.

Instantly I forgot the knife and all the plans that went with it. I splashed into the water and began propelling myself down to the hidden mouth of the lake with all possible speed.

CHAPTER VIII

Iron Man Kuntz

WHEN the snorting, chugging motor-boat pulled away from the ship's rope ladder and made for my beach loaded down with leather-lunged men, I was right with them. Of course, I wasn't a conspicuous member of the party. They were in the boat; I was clinging to the underside of it.

As an octopus I wouldn't have been welcome, even as a stowaway among these robust, bronzed, bewhiskered sailors. The reason being that I couldn't understand German well enough to get along.

This gang was a Hitler outfit to the core. I knew it within five minutes.

By the time I made my second sub-

motorboat trip (there were eight trips in all, each unloading eight or ten men on my shore) I had picked up more news—partly in German, partly English—than had ever entered my dreams of the past two years.

The war was past and gone!

That, above all else, changed my whole misty outlook upon the old world that I had departed.

The war was over, the Allies had won! The news very nearly made me leap into the air and wave my tentacles on high. And yet here was a band of seventy or eighty Hitlerite Germans prowling the sea in a modern merchant steamer. What did it mean?

As soon as I could gather my wits I realized that I'd better get on the job and safeguard my island treasures. This gang would be no respecter of one's properties.

The mouth of my cave, fortunately, would not be seen unless these men decided to have a swim in my lake. The old stone path down from my Camel Point observation post had been broken up by spills of stone and lava. From the water, however, the cave was accessible, though quite well hidden.

I paddled through one of the watery tunnels that led from the ocean into my lake. I crept along in the shadows of the bank until I arrived, unseen, at my cave entrance.

I could hear the voices from only twenty-five feet above me. Already some of the invaders were planting themselves on Camel Point.

From their talk, and from what I could see, peering out from my dark alcove of rock, I could keep abreast of the activities of the landing party.

Looking back of me I could see numerous shadowy objects that they should never be allowed to see.

There were the metal boxes of food concentrates, stacks of them. There

were my riches of dry wood for cooking, scarcely touched since the day I changed to an octopus.

There were very few tools and weapons—the chef's butcher-knife, some spoon-shaped shells and some bits of wire, an old spade.

Finally, there were long rows of time-bombs. The last of them from the cache in the Japanese hut had long since been removed to these cavernous quarters.

THESE things I meant to keep out of the hands of my uninvited visitors. In spite of their apparent uselessness to me, I felt a jealous pride in possessing them. Moreover, I meant to let these invaders come and go without knowing anything about me.

But there were a few signs sticking around here and there that immediately aroused some curiosity.

"Sutter's Lake," a guttural voice from Camel Point sounded down to me. "Vot's der meaning?"

"English name," someone answered. "Der Americans must have flew in here."

"Must haf flew out again."

When the motorboat brought another load, there were more voices above me, and again that question, "Who vas Sutter?"

One fellow named Ernest was called in on the discussion because he knew all about the Pacific end of the war. He was stumped. In all his books of names of generals he didn't have anyone that he could blame for the name of the island.

His surprisingly accurate conclusion was that this uncharted island had been overlooked by the Allies and must have been named by someone who floated in on a rubber raft.

"Wait till Captain Kuntz comes ashore," said Ernest. "He'll haf some

ideas."

"And if General Sutter iss here?"

"The captain will make paper dolls out of his hide."

The party went down the beach about half a mile to make camp. They had found one of the island's best springs, and they kept the little motorboat busy plying back and forth with steel barrels of water for their ship's supply.

I waited until dark before I went to work, for fear I'd roil the waters of my lake with mud. When all was safe I got my spade and moved a ton or so of clay. By morning every trace of my cave civilization was pasted over with layers of clay. Moreover, the perilous approaches around the hidden entrance were turned into vertical clay banks to make my sanctum virtually inaccessible.

That morning I had the pleasure of seeing the chief pirateer of this Nazi pirate band, Captain Adolf Kuntz. Believe me, it was no pleasure, but agony.

Although most of his crew were rugged and unkempt, and some of them naked to the waist, Adolf Kuntz was as starchy as any military officer you ever saw.

HE WAS young—perhaps thirty-five. His hair was closely cropped, and there was an iron medal on his puffed-out chest. There was iron in his words, too, and a suggestion of something metallic in his tight lined face. There was a slight nervous twitch in the squint line of his tiger eyes when he gave orders.

His first order that I overheard was, "Search the island. Find this man Sutter and all his tribe and bring them to me."

"Suppose we find some Japs," someone suggested.

"Whoever you find, bring them here. We're taking over. We don't give a

damn about the Japs. We're here. We'll shake this island down for anything it's got."

"But if there's a couple hundred or so—" the mate began.

"Shut up, Blagg. You've got your orders."

After he had dispatched several parties in several directions, he lit a cigarette and settled down into a comfortable mood of pacing and grumbling.

"Two or three hundred of them!" he muttered. "This island is only three miles long and a mile wide. If it was inhabited we'd know it by now."

Ernest, his military authority, quite agreed. Three or four others who were bringing up some radio equipment from the boat likewise murmured their *ja's* to whatever Adolf Kuntz said. A confident, cocky little devil he was; quick and sure and cruel. I was to see plenty of that soon.

He must have dealt a clever and daring stroke at the time of the Allied victory over the Axis to have succeeded in slipping away from battleships and scouting planes in time to avoid showing the white flag.

Now "*Die Welt*" was flying without a flag—a law unto itself, with an impudent name that cried their defiance to all organized government. Free on the high seas, they still thought the world was theirs.

How long could they get away with such defiance? That, I reflected, would depend upon how clever they were at pirating, and how skillful at covering their guilt if and when the international marines accosted them.

Scouts returned during the next two hours. "Whoever this Sutter was," one of them declared, "he's gone."

"Lucky for him," said Kuntz. "I can't think of anything more pleasant than to drop our net over a few Englishmen or Americans and make them

squirm. Eh, Ernest?"

So went the talk and at times it caused a lot of tightening in my mantled throat to listen to them.

Ernest's comments, which I could not catch in full, seemed to imply that there might be a giant kidnaping and black-mail scheme in the hearts of these stowaway plunderers. If they could skirt the coasts and take a few important prisoners, then work through a fence into fat and respectable pocket-books without stirring any scare headlines, they might succeed in establishing a much more profitable game than straight pirating.

Adolf Kuntz was not moved by this talk today. And besides, his overgrown mate, Blagg, was returning, his immense gray boots crunching over the pebbles.

"Go back and make a careful check of those three Jap houses," said Kuntz. "Don't hurry."

"I looked in them already," said Blagg. "There's nothing—"

Swat! Adolph Kuntz struck the big man an open blow across the face. The big fellow's thick face sagged and his eyes glared with as much cruelty as Kuntz's.

I HAD to duck and swim away at that moment. My sensitive tentacles had involuntarily recoiled, and the result was too much churning of the water for safety. Ernest and some others, at work on the radio equipment, gave me a look, and I saw the lips of one form the word "devil fish."

This was a lesson to me. It was all right to take a chance, especially if I had a good shadowed bank for hiding. But however engrossing the conversations, I must not let my tentacles unfreeze unexpectedly and make a target out of me.

Well, when I got my next look at

Blagg a few minutes later, he was trudging back toward the Jap houses.

Kuntz was pacing. "I can't think when that damned ox is bellowing around . . . Sutter . . . Sutter . . . that name . . ."

Later that night some fond idea must have struck him. It was too dark to see his expression, but there was that sinister tone in his voice that presaged cruel pleasures.

"We're going to have company," he said, as he approached the radio transmitter. "An American ship, Ernest. Where's Blagg? I'll have to get it through his thick skull that there'll be guests to treat with courtesy. That is, at first. Later on there may be work for Blagg."

"An American ship, Captain?" said Ernest.

Kuntz lighted a cigarette and for a moment I could see the nervous twitch of the lines around his eyes as he smiled at his confident. "I've been listening to the radio every day, you know. I don't miss much. This small American ship is visiting some Pacific battle-zones."

"So?"

"So I thought I recognized the name of one of the passengers who was making inquiries about a lost soldier."

"An old friend of yours?" asked Ernest, catching the drift.

"An American girl who attended school in Germany. The name was the same. Still, I wasn't sure—until this name Sutter soaked in."

"What does Sutter have to do with it?"

"The radiocast mentioned that she was searching for one Walter Sutter, missing since sometime in the middle of the war. But wait. What's the hour? Ten? I should be able to bring them in right now."

In high and eager spirits Captain

Kuntz went to work at the two-way radio. Several minutes later he succeeded in establishing communication.

I was listening from the water's edge almost directly beneath this twenty-five foot ledge of rock, from which I had sometimes tossed biscuits to the alligator gar. My tentacles were trembling.

"Hello, hello, hello, Marcia Gregory," Captain Kuntz barked. "Don't you recognize the voice? No, you'd never guess. I haven't talked with you for years—not since before the war; but that's all over. We can let bygones be bygones, can't we? . . . Your old friend Adolf Kuntz . . . Ah, I thought you'd remember . . . You don't sound too happy, Marcia. Troubles, eh? Well, I have some news of interest for you. I'm with a little touring party, Marcia, and we've bumped into a tiny island called Sutter's Island . . . yes, Sutter . . . I thought that would mean something to you. Well, we're on his trail. I think we'll find him here somewhere. . . . Listen, Marcia, the thing for you to do is to bring your party and come right on over this way. I'll give you the exact location. . . . You will? Good. I'll try to wait right here till you arrive."

CHAPTER IX

Rumor Out of the Crater

THE island, my little world of peace and quiet, was quickly converted into an outdoor madhouse from the hour the crew of *Die Welt* got the casks of whiskey unloaded. I didn't have to be too careful for the next three days, because half of the sailors were seeing pink elephants and purple serpents, and the other half were too busy fighting or sleeping to see anything. So one octopus more or less didn't make any dif-

ference, even if it peeked over a rock and cocked its head to get in on the conversation.

But by the afternoon that the good ship *Silver Belle* arrived, the captain of *Die Welt* had everything on the island in passable order.

The stage, in fact, was set for a particular effect.

Captain Kuntz himself was at the radio softening his earlier note of enthusiasm by warning his approaching visitor that she mustn't be too disappointed.

"No, we haven't found him yet, Marcia. I'm expecting another scouting party to return any minute. But the signs are so encouraging. . . . Yes, you must come ashore . . . your whole party should come. It's a very interesting spot. Certainly, accommodations."

I was in a mental whirl trying to think of some way to head off this move. All the roofs of huts and caves on the island wouldn't provide enough shelter for this American party of fifty. But the idea that must have dominated the American ship was that there was an island to be searched; and fifty additional searchers could be used to advantage.

The *Silver Belle* rode in proudly and dropped anchor about a hundred yards to the south of *Die Welt* so that both ships stood in full view a quarter of a mile east of the lake end of the island.

The German motorboat went out to help bring some passengers ashore. Captain Kuntz himself went out with it, to invite the Americans to come ashore and share a feast and enjoy such accommodations as the Japanese buildings offered. He was going to have to do some tall exaggerating, and his pirate workmen were primed to help put the welcome across.

Those who were lucky enough not to

be burdened with kitchen duties around the camp-fires had been sent out to the island's west end so that they could come back as if from another search for the lost Sutter.

Later I was to learn that the Germans "borrowed" just enough radio parts during this landing to leave the transmitter of the American ship totally useless.

Now I clung to the shadowy south edge of my lake, and picked up what sounds floated across to me from the camp along the north side over the quiet waters.

There were too many alert eyes taking in the scene now for me to take any chances.

It was torture waiting, wondering if Marcia Gregory would actually appear before my eyes.

THEN soon among the very cheery welcomes I heard her voice. Across the distance I saw her, like something very vivid within a dream. She was accepting Captain Kuntz's welcome without sharing his enthusiastic mood. My first thought was, how serious-minded she's become since I last saw her. If he'd have wisecracked a little or tossed in a reference to the daily comics, she'd have responded with plenty of ringing laughter.

Or would she? On second thought I realized that she had come here on a mission that was not exactly a lark. She was here with a heavy heart. To know that I had not been found, that only traces of me had been found, had filled her with sorrow.

The Captain tried to brighten her mood by talking louder, blustering excitedly about old times in Berlin and by-gones that should be by-gones. It was too much for her. She asked to be excused and came away from the debarking crowds as if to be alone. A few

steps behind her, her father and a tall and not-too-handsome friend by the name of Dan followed.

Captain Kuntz shrugged his shoulders and turned to the duties of keeping his hospitality show in motion. Dinner would be served around the camp-fires soon. And what was this—news from another searching party?

Blagg came in to report, but the effect of his cut-and-dried speech was largely lost, which was just as well. He got mixed up and made the very misleading statement that they had found my ashes. He was supposed to say "camp-fires"—but he made it sound as if either the volcano or the cannibals had got me.

Marcia walked along the lake edge until she came to Camel Point. There she found my sign, Sutter's Lake.

If ever an octopus looked upon a sight that softened him to his cartilaginous core, it was seeing what I saw there.

I had forgotten that Marcia was so beautiful. Poets who like to dwell on sunset scenes should have had that picture. Or would they have seen only the beauty of the face and the form, the auburn hair highlighted in the shafts of sunlight, the luscious lashes and the deep, soulful eyes? Perhaps no poet would have seen, as clearly as this octopus saw, the faithful heart of this beautiful girl.

All the way across the Pacific she had come to kneel beside this wooden sign with the red lacquered letters. That, I said to myself, had taken some strength of character. She, too, had undergone some changes with the war. There was less of the dizzy youth about her that I had remembered so well from the days of tennis and bowling and the reading of the Sunday comics.

Her father came to her. In deference to her mood he spoke softly. Strange

transformations can occur on this side of the Pacific. To think how he used to growl! Especially when we forgot to pay attention to his travel movies. Well, he was a pretty good old scout, and I wished just then that I could have walked right up and shaken hands with him.

AND don't think my eight arms weren't aching to embrace my gorgeous sweetie. But I was all wet and slimy, and it would have been a shame to spoil her pretty green gabardine sports suit.

The tall young lad named Dan would have been at her side constantly, I judged, if her father hadn't always elbowed in between them. I was naturally a bit jealous of this young fellow, and of his white flannels and blue dinner coat. At the same time I knew how I'd have felt if I'd been in his well polished shoes and old man Gregory had kept me from giving Marcia a comforting pat at a time like this.

As a matter of fact, I would gladly have traded places with young Danny Boy, if I could have fitted myself into his white flannel trousers and poured him into this octopus mold.

That gave me something to think about after they'd gone off for dinner and night came on. Wouldn't it be a blessing if there'd be another volcanic upheaval? Maybe Danny Boy and I could manage to get caught under the same avalanche and by some freak of nature we would change places. M-m-m—I wondered. Not that I wished Dan Wanzer any bad luck.

After about an hour of sleep that night I awoke with the volcano idea pounding in my brain. Like a sleep-walker, I took a sudden notion that it was high time for me to do a little midnight climbing. The compelling idea drove me to load up with all the time-

bombs I could tie together and carry, and make the slow, painful march up the mountainside.

It was a wild thing to try. I remembered that two time-bombs had simply gone off when tossed down the crater.

But would not these ten, going off simultaneously, have a much better chance of blowing the lid off the lava?

A mad scheme, indeed; but I had seen Marcia.

I had seen Marcia, and I had been thrilled to every tip of every arm. But I had been made to know, by her simple, silent gestures and expressions, how much she wanted to see me.

And so I was all for trying to uncork that dreadful mystery that had gnawed at my mind ever since the night of the second volcano.

For on that night, according to all the evidence, I had temporarily returned to my human form.

I reached the lip of the crater. The red-hot wall across from my perilous foothold cast a baleful light across, by which I checked the gauges on the bundle of explosives. By a rope I let them down to a shelf where they would lie in silence for thirty minutes. That would give me time to creep and bounce and cartwheel down the slope to the shoreline.

But the best-laid plans of octopuses and men go astray on Sutter's Island.

On the way down I heard the voices of Captain Kuntz, Marcia's father, Ernest, Dan and three or four others, coming in my direction. They were lighting their way with flashlights, hiking up the slope. As a party of sightseers, they were coming up to look into the crater by night.

"Marcia should have come along," said Captain Kuntz. "This will be a rare sight. The effect should be much better by night."

"Her maid," said Mr. Gregory, "wouldn't have it. She sees that Marcia gets her sleep if she had to guard the doors with a baseball bat. She knows how to take care of things, even if she is white-haired and funny-faced and seventy."

I didn't stay to hear any more about the virtues of Marcia's lady-in-waiting. My thoughts were on the bounce as much as my body. If there had been any way to do it I'd have outraced this party back to the mountain top and drawn the time-bombs up to postpone the fireworks.

But I was a slow walker on dry land, especially uphill.

MY FIRST impulse was to hurry on down to the shore and start a commotion of some sort that would bring them back. Then if the cap of that volcano should blow up, at least they wouldn't go up with the blast.

Start a commotion? Yes, I might light a fire. Or throw some time-bombs into the sea. But there wouldn't be time. What then? If only I could shout!

I whirled on three tentacles and reversed my direction. Up the hill I galloped, as fast as I was able. My progress was noiseless. The men went on with their talking. Two Germans in the lead were carrying electric lanterns. The dark silhouette of this large figure trudging along lazily a few yards behind the others was familiar.

It was Blagg, bringing up the rear.

I caught up with him and took him to my bosom before he could say Jack Robinson.

My first reach slapped his mouth closed with a tentacle that coiled three times around his face.

Almost instantly two more of my arms jerked his two wrists behind him; another arm roped his ankles together.

He fell, *kerbiff*, and I fell on top of him. him.

"Coming Blagg?" someone called back.

Blagg didn't answer. There were too many dozens of little suction pumps acting on him at once. He was fresh out of words.

He put up a decent struggle that made me think for a minute that I'd be smashed to jelly. But he didn't utter a sound until I was ready for him to do so. Then he gave out with a bellow that any movie Tarzan would have envied.

"Waa-oooooh! Haaallpp!"

If they had had any faith in Blagg they'd have swung the lights right around and I'd have had to duck for a hiding place.

Instead Captain Kuntz shouted back something in a very disgusted tone about stopping the funny stuff. "Come on, you lazy bum!"

"Snakes!" Blagg cried. "A hundred snakes. They're all around me!"

"Drunk again — at this hour!" I heard Captain Kuntz snarl.

And that was that. The party went right on up the mountainside undeterred by Blagg's roars of terror.

I had a double hammerlock on him now. Before I let him go I made sure he had no weapons to seize and turn on me. Then I went down the hill as fast as I could go. This trick had failed utterly. Was there time to try something else?

Several minutes later I was in my black cave throwing back a clay-covered flap of burlap to reach for more time-bombs. But I knew I was already too late to call the party back with any further distraction.

From the crater a series of explosions echoed down to me with repercussions that resembled the popping of penny candy sacks.

I climbed back to my Camel Point and gazed up through the darkness. The flashlights had reached the summit of the cone. The party was up there, all right, but there were no signs of any excitement.

And so my effort to start some volcanic action had proved a complete dud. I turned in for some sleep, for I was tired, and all eight of my arms were aching.

However, the following day I learned, much to my surprise, that the little pop-off of bombs had had one effect, and a very weird one. They had started a rumor.

The rumor must have been invented by the two Germans who reached the crater ahead of the others. They claimed that they saw the "gunfire" which others only heard.

Those successive "shots"—according to their report—were nothing less than an act of suicide. Yes, they had seen it happen. Their glimpse had convinced them the man was an American, doubtless crazy from loneliness, who had chosen this night to end it all. He had shot himself with his revolver and fallen from a crater shelf into the lava.

CHAPTER X

Marching Orders

THE rumor grew hourly. Captain Kuntz, seizing upon it, talked it up among his crew, and by afternoon he had himself convinced.

"It's a very sad thing, Miss Gregory," he said. "It would seem that we were all just a bit too late. I haven't the slightest doubt that this man was your one-time acquaintance—"

"He was more than an acquaintance," said Marcia, and her tone was somewhat belligerent, also very skepti-

cal. "I'm not convinced that it was Walter."

"I see no reason to doubt it," said the Captain, pacing arrogantly around back and forth along the beach. "You say he's been traced to this corner of the ocean. All the evidence on the island says that one man has lived here and his name was Sutter."

"The description didn't fit Walter. He wasn't short and fat and dark, like your men said," Marcia protested.

"I wouldn't take those details too seriously," said Kuntz. "By such poor light, you know, blonde hair might appear dark. What's more, now that they've thought it over they agree that the man might have been rather tall. Sights are always deceiving when you first look down a volcano crater, Marcia. You can understand that."

"No, I cannot," said Marcia. "And there's something else I can't understand. How could a man shoot himself so many times? There were several shots?"

"I see no reason to doubt that," said the Captain stubbornly. "He kept shooting until he lost his footing and splashed down into the lava. I suppose you think his body should be found floating around on top."

"Marcia has a right to be skeptical," her father put in. "There's the matter of that length of old rope we found hanging down from the rock. The lower end of it was burned off. Bullets didn't do it. And there was no volcano blaze along that wall."

"How do you explain it?" asked Kuntz. "You were the third one to look over after the bullets started flying."

At this point Dan Wanzer broke in with more confusion. "Frankly, gentlemen, I didn't see any gun or any bullets, and not a sign of any man, other than those of our own party."

Blagg, too, tried to get a word in.

For his part the volcanoes and the suicides could take care of themselves, but he was here to tell the world they'd better look out for monster serpents. The mountainside was full of them.

In the end the volcano story filled out to goodly proportions. The Germans, once educated by Hitler to swallow the world's biggest lies, generally accepted the version that I had hanged myself, burned myself to death, shot myself a dozen times, and finally plunged into the volcano to make a thorough job of it.

All of which had a rather sobering effect upon me—until I thought of the lesson the Germans must have learned in the war. They'd found the Americans hard to kill.

Captain Kuntz wanted to hold services for me. It was a dirty trick, calculated to convince Marcia that everyone accepted the fact of my death.

Marcia rebelled and lost her temper, and the way she behaved was worth seeing. She took a slap at Adolf Kuntz, she called his gaunt-faced, owl-eyed confidant a liar, she kicked part of the radio equipment into the sea. Danny Boy and her father led her back a few paces to make her calm down.

SHE calmed, and then she repented and softened. She had to admit that Captain Kuntz might be right after all: Then, poor girl, she wept bitter tears.

Ernest, catching his cue from his captain, immediately took advantage of this situation. He called the hard-boiled, murderous-faced German crew around him and opened up with an impromptu memorial service to me, the dear departed friend of Marcia Gregory.

Marcia's whole party of American tourists got into the spirit. It seemed such a fine gesture on the part of this German "merchant crew" to share these

American sorrows.

It was interesting to see how everyone fell under the spell of Ernest's oratory. At times there was hardly a dry eye on the island. In fact, when Ernest got around to eulogizing me and telling that he was sure, although he hadn't known me personally, that I undoubtedly had lived an honorable and courageous life right up to that fatal moment when some malady of mind seized me, well, even I shed a few octopus tears *kersplash* into the peaceful waters of Sutter's Lake.

The sentimental mood took an unexpected jump.

If the tropical ocean had suddenly turned to ice cream or the volcano had given forth lava streams of chocolate pudding, the American party couldn't have been much more surprised.

Ernest finished with his benediction and lifted his owlish eyes slowly. He turned his very serious face toward Captain Kuntz—and winked.

Captain Kuntz nodded, threw a quick, nervous, squinting expression at Blagg.

Blagg and six other Germans came out of what had appeared to be a careless huddle. Every man of them was holding an automatic rifle.

"We've got the crowd covered," said Blagg. "Tell us when to fire."

You could hear the gasps, the exclamations, the sudden wails of protest.

"Shut up, you damned Americans, or we'll blow your heads off," Blagg yelled.

"Steady, Blagg," said Captain Kuntz. "We've got 'em. No one will be fool enough to resist."

"Adolf Kuntz, how can you?" Marcia cried out.

The Captain extended a friendly hand to her.

"Don't worry, dear. You know that you won't be harmed. I promised you

that when we planned this little party. You've kept your end of the bargain by bringing your fifty people. You'll be rewarded—"

"Bargain!" Marcia gasped hotly. "There wasn't any bargain! There wasn't any plan!"

"Oh, yes, there was," said Kuntz with a wry smile. "Think back to our radio conversation. We don't need to keep it a secret from your *friends*. They can't hurt you. You'll never be seeing any of them again."

In utter exasperation Marcia turned to her father. "Dad, you don't believe this! You can't! And you, Dan. And you—"

She looked at the circle of frightened and bewildered faces. Everyone was seemingly paralyzed.

"Save your breath, Marcia," the captain snapped. "Listen closely, everyone, if you don't want to get hurt. I'm giving orders. You Americans are taking them. Is there anyone that doesn't understand that?"

"I don't, by God!" Old man Gregory was right up on his toes.

So was young Dan Wanzer. He blurted something that Captain Kuntz and his men didn't like.

Three or four other men in the American crowd likewise barked out rebelliously.

It all happened in a second or two.

Blagg fired. His bullet caught Dan. The tall young man fell forward, clutching his chest.

"Don't touch him, Gregory," the captain said, "or you'll get the same. Now you're ready to listen to me . . . I thought so."

Orders or no orders, Marcia sprang to Danny Boy's side, crying to him. His eyes turned to her, and it was plain they were both puzzled and terribly frightened over this awful turn of events.

Before she could give attention to

his wound, another order came from the captain. Three men responded and bore Dan back away from the crowd to give him first aid.

Then the way was clear for Adolph Kuntz to speak his little piece, and no one made any move to defy him. What he had to say cut through the deathly silence like a voice from Judgment Day.

CHAPTER XI

Terror in Transit

THESE facts were made perfectly clear to every man, fish, fowl or octopus that might be listening.

Adolph Kuntz and his men were still Nazis. They had never been conquered. They never would be. They owned their merchant ship, *Die Welt*; they owned the high seas. They were a law unto themselves. In brief, no other body of seventy-five men could so rightfully claim to own the world as they.

"While we are on this island it is ours," said Kuntz. "While you Americans stand on this island, you are our subjects."

The stormy old Mr. Gregory couldn't refrain from breaking in, for he thought he saw a streak of light through this trouble storm.

"We'll get off your island this very hour," the old man shouted. "We'll cause you no trouble."

"Not so fast, Gregory. Do you think we'll turn our wealthy subjects loose so easy?"

"I suppose you want our money," Gregory growled.

"Money—yes. We'll take that. But your wealth isn't all in money. Several of you able-bodied men have strong backs and good muscles. We can use those. When we make a haul there's lots of heavy work to do."

Gregory blazed. "Are you inferring that we're to become your slaves?"

"Exactly," said Kuntz, pausing to light a cigarette. "I'm glad you're beginning to understand."

His assistant spokesman Ernest added, "It's just a nice little Nazi custom we learned from Hitler."

The murmurs grew loud. Blagg and his men gestured with their guns. The grumbings and mumblings gave way to silence.

"What of the women of our party?" Mr. Gregory asked.

The captain smirked as he again passed his approving eye over the circle of frightened faces. He commented that a variety of answers might be made to that question, since there was quite a variety of women. He mentioned sarcastically that some of his sea-roving band might decide to marry and settle down—a suggestion which brought a roar of laughter from Blagg and his compatriots.

"My men will decide whether any women are to be taken," Kuntz concluded. "Your daughter Marcia, I repeat, will have safe passage back to America—and you too, Gregory, if you cooperate as well as your daughter. . . . But most of you women can't be returned because you couldn't keep your mouths shut. Soon there'd be a search squadron after us. The best plan will be to leave you here on the island to starve to death."

THE general demonstrations of fear and pleading which this statement evoked did nothing whatever to shake Kuntz from his decision.

He simply said, "So you are shocked? Is there anything unusual about starving women to death? You forget we are Nazis."

Well, the Americans could do nothing but listen to orders and make their

plans accordingly. It was made plain that Kuntz and his men would take over the *Silver Belle* for their own; that they would collect all jewelry; that they would hold a few important personages who happened to be among the party on the chance that they might collect ransoms for them.

This was one of the days that the little snails eyed me wistfully and wondered why I didn't make a pass at them. The truth was, I felt as if I'd never have an appetite again, everything looked so gloomy and hopeless.

At the same time there was something healthy for me in all this conflict. Awful as it was, at least I had something to fight for. Where I had once been on the verge of tying my tentacles up in knots and hanging myself up on a crag for the sea gulls, now all at once I wanted to live—and fight!

Even if Marcia could never see me again—could never know that I was still right in there punching at the enemy to make life safe for her—I wanted to live and fight like hell. Even if it looked like no chance against all these odds. . . .

The Germans were wasting no time; already Blagg was climbing into his motorboat with eight armed men.

"We're off for the *Silver Belle*!" he shouted. "Dose six Americans left on board vill ride right ofer to *Die Welt* and put behind bars till dey get happy. If any resist, ve shoot."

Off they went, over the waves.

Off I went, under. Darned handy to have a friend like the alligator gar at a time like this. For submarine taxi service I never saw his equal.

Good natured fish, that overgrown gar. He didn't mind if one or two of my tentacles brought along some wire and a time-bomb.

Four minutes after the nine men chugged away from the beach, bound

for a surprise capture of the *Silver Belle*, their floating pop-boat blew up.

Very mysteriously it exploded, and the splash was wonderful to see.

Blagg and one other man came swimming back. Two others floundered and cried for help. The other five weren't in any shape to be counted.

CHAPTER XII

Gregory Goes for a Ride

BLAGG tried to swear that he'd been fired upon from some hidden gun on the *Silver Belle*.

"That's not so, Blagg," Captain Kuntz snapped. "I was watching every minute. You exploded."

"How did it happen?"

"It looked to me," said Kuntz, "like another case of your volcano suicide. There's more here than meets the eye."

There was much more activity going on during the rest of the day than I could keep my eyes on. I did my best to keep watch over the space of water between the beach and the two ships. What I had done before I could do again.

The Americans, naturally, were going into huddles. The German guards, naturally were suspicious whenever three or four Americans got their heads together. Little assemblies for secret talk would gather and grow in one part of the island or another. The guards would follow in and break them up.

Every half hour or so you could hear some angry shouting, cursing, and threatening to shoot. Now and then a shot would be fired. Then a big crowd would gather in to see whether anyone had been hit. And so the storm of words and nerves and bullets gathered fury.

All the while Captain Kuntz and a

large number of his men were kept busy from this little sea disaster that I had created.

Without their motorboat or their radio, they were in a bad way for communicating with their ship. However, they had wigwagged a message across right after the explosion. Three of the men on board rowed in toward shore in a patched-up gray and white rowboat.

As long as they were at work recovering what they could of the five bodies, I didn't bother them. The sharks were giving them enough trouble.

Later they plied back from the ship with a couple of diving helmets and I saw that they meant to salvage some of the guns that had gone down. It was an impossible job. The waves were coming in and there was a strong undertow. They had to give up.

Next they went for the radio equipment that Marcia had so efficiently kicked into the sea. They found parts of it wedged in the rocks about twenty feet under the surface.

The alligator gar and I watched the two divers floundering around in their helmets. What a clumsy lout a man is when he tries to walk under water! These two fellows weren't having much luck, so I dropped over and paid them a visit.

They weren't glad to see me.

I didn't like them either. So I reached out and removed their glass helmets and jerked off their oxygen tanks—an action which inspired them to take their leave of me and climb double-time to the surface.

I crept back to my cave and hit my helmets. They might prove useful in this uncertain course of events.

Near sunset Captain Kuntz loaded Old Man Gregory into the leaky rowboat with four gunmen.

Marcia, who had been watching over

her wounded boy friend, came running down to the shore.

"Where are you taking my father?" she cried.

"It's all right, Marcia," Mr. Gregory called to her. "Don't antagonize them."

THOSE words gave me a shiver.

They sounded so much like the voices that used to come from peace-loving nations before the war, when Nazi Germany was already terrorizing and brutalizing her neighbors.

"Don't antagonize us, Marcia," Captain Kuntz echoed with a cynical smile. "I'm sending your father along with this boat-load to make sure there are no mishaps. I know I can trust him to deliver—just like I trusted you to play my game."

"Your game!" Marcia blazed. "I didn't know. These people know I'm innocent."

Her turn to the onlookers was not too reassuring. They were weighing her in the balance. After all, was it not her old friendship for this Nazi that had led them all into this trap?

Her expression seemed to say, "You've got to believe me."

But Captain Kuntz was doing the talking.

"Let's have no misunderstanding, Gregory. You're to deliver your yacht and the six men aboard it to my ship. You're to come back here in the lifeboat off your yacht. We need that boat. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," said the old man.

"I trust we won't have any more of these mysterious explosions. What our motorboat struck could have been a small floating mine. I hope you'll return safely, Gregory."

The implication was pointed enough, stressed by the captain's sarcastic manner, that none of the listeners missed.

If some American trickery had been involved in that motorboat disaster, the tricksters would think twice. With Gregory aboard they wouldn't dare repeat the act.

I had a biscuit all ready for the alligator gar, and he had a bareback ride ready for me. Off we went.

The rowboat rocked along through the waves. They made the old man help row, and in spite of his age he was doing a vigorous job of it.

My green-finned friend and I skimmed along right under the surface. I bobbed up about every tenth wave until we were within forty yards. The *Silver Belle* was still an eighth of a mile farther out. The six men on board were watching the progress of the rowboat from the gleaming white rail.

I waited until the rowboat was somewhat nearer the *Silver Belle*. Then the gar and I came up directly under it. I found a strip of steel running the length of the keel. I jammed the sharp point of the wire through and fastened my time-bomb.

I glanced up at the oars working through the yellow water on either side of the hull. Gregory's stroke was unmistakable. I set the bomb for thirty seconds.

The gar came through like a veteran. He darted through an arc that tossed me to the surface alongside Gregory's left oar.

I heard a couple of guttural oaths and a gasp of surprise like the intake of a rusty pump. I expected shots, too, and I wasn't disappointed.

In a flash I grabbed Old Man Gregory with three arms. He came, as light as a feather, and down we went, off on a sharp angle to the count of ten, then up again.

We hit the surface just in time to save the Gregory eardrums.

The explosion came with a bang and

a rattle and a terrific smack of water coming together where four men and a boat had been.

Old Man Gregory might have had a heart attack or a stroke if he hadn't been so busy saving himself. An awfully decent fellow, Gregory. As I freed him I expected him to swim straight for his yacht. He didn't do it until he saw that he couldn't do the life-saving act for any of his erstwhile captors.

The explosion had got them. They were past being helped. But his gesture of forgiveness was something to think about. What a soft lot we Americans have become!

GREGORY'S anger and fear toward me had been exactly what I expected. But I'll bet he had some curious afterthoughts when he arrived safe and soaked on the deck of his ship. He had missed death by thirty seconds! Only a surprise visit from a big, tough, ugly devilfish had saved his life. Wouldn't that be a story to tell his grandchildren?

As for myself, I hadn't done so well. Within the first few seconds after I grabbed Gregory, a few wild bullets flew in my direction. One of them cut a pinhole through one of my most useful arms. To be precise, my sixth arm as numbered clockwise. Soon after the excitement of the explosion I was painfully aware of this injury. A strip of two feet from the end of the tentacle was paralyzed and therefore worse than useless.

When I got back to the island a few minutes after sunset, I crawled through the water tunnels into my lake, intending to turn in and nurse my wound.

But there was a show going on that I couldn't afford to miss. It was Captain Kuntz, pacing in front of everyone, cursing the air blue.

I expected him to be just plain mad over what had happened. He was a lot madder than that. He was roaring like a lion with a thorn in every paw.

Two explosions! They couldn't be accidents. Nine of his men lost in one day. It was an unholy outrage. Those men were the cream of his band. They were highly trained, highly experienced. They had helped trample Poland underfoot, and Holland, and Greece.

I missed the worst of this demonstration; however. For which I'm glad, for it was something I wouldn't care to see.

It had happened while I was swimming back under water. As soon as the captain had been sure, viewing through his binoculars, that the one and only survivor from the rowboat blast was Gregory, he had ordered four Americans shot.

Now he gloated over the quick act of justice.

"I'll have it understood that my men are going out to that yacht if they have to ride on a long raft. They're going over and take possession. Do I hear any complaints?"

No echoes but the quiet lisp of waves.

"They're going, I repeat," the captain said, lowering his voice to a hard, solid, grindstone whine. Then he let go with ranting fury. "And if any mysterious explosion occurs this time, two of you Americans will die for every man of mine."

The Americans, huddled like sheep, only stared in mingled fear and contempt.

"What's more," Kuntz went on, "ten of you will die to pay for those first five."

This went on until dark. The Americans then were herded back to their camp, in and around the Japanese huts, and guards were set over them for the

night.

It should have been a less quiet night. Unfortunately, the wind and waves fell asleep for the night. There was nothing to drown out the low hum of the little white launch as it swung away from the *Silver Belle*.

It took a wide course. That meant that Old Man Gregory was coming back and he didn't want the guards to know it.

My heart quickened. Obviously it was his hope that he might smuggle the Americans back to their ship before morning and anchors aweigh.

As bad luck would have it, a German scouting party had him spotted. They slipped along the shore and I followed after them. When the launch started to pull in to a deeply shadowed cove, I was right under the prow, tugging with all my strength to turn it back to sea.

I was no match for the power of that launch, and I got my wounded arm smashed in the bargain.

Gregory nosed the little craft into a bank, jumped ashore and started to tie up.

Out of the blackness the hidden scouts came with a flashlight and pistols. They pounced upon Gregory mercilessly. Two of them jumped into the launch and motored around to the captain's headquarters on the east beach.

The other four dragged Old Man Gregory off into the darkness.

CHAPTER XIII

Council Ends at Midnight

"IT'S ten o'clock," said Captain Kuntz to one of the guards reporting from the American camp. "Can't you get those sobbing people to shut up? I can't stand all that blubbering."

"That's vat I say," Blagg echoed. "Ve can't think. Tell 'em no more

sniffles and nose-blowing."

"They're scared," said the guard. "They're so scared they can't sleep."

"They'll have to get used to us," said Captain Kuntz. "In time they'll learn to like us." He bore down on this point with a guttural laugh. Then he snapped savagely. "They've got nothing to bawl about. They're ahead of us. They've only buried four men. Puny ones at that. You noticed that I was careful not to shoot any young huskies?"

Ernest said, "I observed that fact, Captain. An excellent selection."

"Just der vay I vould haf done it," said Blagg. "How soon do ve load up our slaves?"

The captain turned the question back to his massive mate in the form of a challenge.

"Their launch is at your service, Blagg," Kuntz said. "How long will it take you to do the job."

"Me?" asked Blagg.

"Certainly you," said Ernest. "I haf to round up der supplies."

"So you're scared," said the captain.

It was a silent gang that sat around him. Someone kicked the low-burning camp-fire, and the light flared up to reveal the hard faces, the bulky frames of this murderous band. Everyone was watching the cocky little captain.

What he had said was a slap at every one of them. Of course they were scared. So was he. After the two mysterious disasters how could anyone be fool enough to start across that stretch of water? And so they stalled. The big mate snarled back at Kuntz. "Damn you, vy don't you ride out and git your head blown off?"

Ernest rolled his owlsh eyes. "That calls for an answer, Captain."

"Hell, get away and let me think," Kuntz barked. "I'll get to the bottom of this myself. I'll lay a plan. There's

a way to whip this undertow ghost. That's what it is—a ghost that's haunting us from under the water. Did you see what happened to Gregory out there? Well, I saw, through the glasses. It was uncanny."

"What was it, Captain?" Ernest asked. Others joined in the question.

"Come back in an hour," said Kuntz. He looked at his watch. "We'll gather at the Sutter's Lake sign at eleven thirty. Council ends at twelve."

THE captain marched on around the beach by himself and was soon lost in the darkness. Some of the others lighted their way along the lava paths up the slope of the cone a short distance, where they could catch the slight breeze and still avoid the crater's sluggish smoke.

I went to my cave.

It elated me, I must admit, to know that I had succeeded thus far in baffling Kuntz and his cutthroats. But I felt as if my time and powers were nearing a rope's end. The captain had seen me through his binoculars.

He knew, then, that I had grabbed Gregory in the nick of time. He knew, too, that both of these explosions had come, not from any gun, not out of the air, and certainly not from any mischief on the part of his own men, but rather from some trap planted beneath the water.

Would he attribute any meaning to Gregory's rescue, or put it down in his mind as pure chance? My fate, as well as my hopes for doing more good, were tied up in that question.

Come eleven thirty o'clock, I was directly beneath the gathering council at Camel Point.

"Here it comes," I said to myself.

"The captain is going to set the party wild with a calm announcement that all the trouble has come from an American-

turned-devilfish with a cave full of time-bombs. And if he does they'll open fire tomorrow on every dark shadow in the water."

What the captain had hatched up to tell his men was much less explicit. However, as a plan for smoking me out I'll say it was rather ingenious. They listened intently.

"This damned undertow ghost may be Gregory himself. It may be someone from the *Silver Belle* who has kept out of sight. Whoever or whatever it is, he'll be trapped tomorrow by noon."

The captain paused. He flipped a burning cigarette butt into the air. I ducked under silently as it descended to the water. The captain went on talking.

"We'll let the Americans know exactly what we intend to do. At noon we intend to turn our ship's gun on the *Silver Belle* and blow it to hell—unless it lifts anchor and comes over to *Die Welt* and surrenders before that hour."

"Can we do it?" Blagg asked.

"We still have a few men on board *Die Welt*. We'll wigwag the order to them to make ready to fire at noon."

"So the Americans will deliver the goods to save their craft and their six men on board," said Ernest.

"Exactly," said Kuntz. "And I'll bet my Iron Cross that no mine will blow up that yacht as she steams over to tie up to *Die Welt*."

"A fine plan," said Blagg heartily.

"It's der very idea I vould have suggested . . . but var does it git us?" Ernest asked.

"Next we start sending the American prisoners out by launch."

"To get exploded on der vay?"

"That's the very point," said the captain. "I'm convinced that those explosions won't occur if the launch is loaded with Americans. This undertow ghost is too careful in selecting his vic-

tims."

There was a brief discussion at this point. In general the men agreed it was a workable plan, as far as the Americans were concerned.

"But how do ve git across?" someone wanted to know. "Our two ships vill be topheavy with American prisoners and ve'll still be stuck on this island. Ven we start across, blooie!"

"It's about time some of you stupid idiots asked that question," said the captain testily. "Here's the idea. In the first launch load we'll sandwich in one of us. In the second load, two. In the third, three. And so on, until we're sure we've established a safe path."

"Der first man vill get across," someone said. "And maybe der next two."

"We'll draw lots for places," said the captain. "It's all we can do. If this launch blows up, there's nothing left for us but to swim for it—"

"Und git blowed up!"

THESE men were so scared, contemplating that stretch of water, that you could hear their shivers in their voices.

"If we have to swim for it," said Kuntz, "We'll keep spread out for safety. In the meantime our ship's guns will be ready to blast any undersea ghost that shows his head."

There I had it in the palm of my hand. This scheme was all sliced and ready for serving. Just to make sure that all the sluggish wits in his band were clear on it, he started to review it, step by step. That was when I went into action.

I crept into my cave, groped through the blackness to a sloping wall of pliable clay. My deft tentacles sliced through the surface with the aid of the chef's butcher-knife. I laid back the flap of clay-covered burlap.

Three of my arms I filled with time-

bombs. A fourth arm, burning like fire from its wounds, rebelled. Unfortunately, one of the bombs slipped and fell to the muddy floor with a *plop!*

I froze my arms and listened. Did that warning sound carry to those cutthroats above my cave?

Cutthroats! There in the intense darkness I smiled an evil octopus smile at this irony. I could damn them as murderers in the same moment that I was preparing bombs to kill the whole outfit of them without warning. But I knew them for what they were. What's more, I hadn't had my share of winning the war. And they had thus far escaped their deserved defeat.

"Vot vas dot?" someone was saying.

"I heard it too!" Captain Kuntz said. Then he cried out with terror. "Run, men. We're in for it! It's coming, sure as hell!"

How did they know I was loaded with bombs?

My error. It wasn't me they were running from. It was the volcano! That restless crater had decided to go mad again. I could hear the whoosh!

Then the roar! The floors and walls of stone vibrated against my tentacles.

Out of the cave I slid just as the great tongue of red light flashed over the water.

Of all the absent-minded tricks! My arms were still loaded. I reached the shelf where I had once stored biscuits for the alligator gar before I disposed of them.

And how I wished for that gar just then!

The volcano was blowing off in earnest. In split seconds of its red flashes I glimpsed figures racing thither and hither along the beach. An immense wave raced out toward the two tossing ships. Then blackness again.

My way led out of the lake. My arms working in rhythm carried me forward;

my funnel pumped water now as never before.

Now I was passing through the water tunnels that connected my lake with the ocean.

Suddenly the rocks around me bulged upward with a thunderous roar. The water fell away from me. The weight of shattering stones crushed in around me from all sides.

I was trapped. I drew my tentacles in close to try to protect my highly vulnerable body. But those sturdy, faithful tentacles weren't equal to the emergency. They couldn't even save themselves.

The last thing I remember seeing was a blaze of red light burning in my eyes, fading like a volcano whose fury is spent.

CHAPTER XIV

The Ghost of Marcia's Sleep

IT'S curious the way a person sometimes wakes up with a compulsion to finish some unfinished task at once. Before my eyes opened—before I was more than twenty percent awake—this long neglected duty began to disturb me.

"I must manicure my fingernails."

How long it had been, I thought, since I had done so. The nails had grown so long that they made a scratching noise as I brushed my hand over the rocks.

And my whiskers! When had I ever gone so long without a shave? My beard felt like a whiskbroom against my bare shoulder.

I tried to open my eyes. The red sun was glaring on the closed lids. A fresh sea breeze was in my nostrils. I took a deep breath and tried to rise up on my elbows.

Sharp pains struck through my left

arm, the lower end of which began to writhe in a coiling motion.

Suddenly I was wide awake, eyes open, staring. The volcano had done it again! I had changed, somehow, back to my original human form.

I could have leaped for joy if there hadn't been a ceiling of rock right over my head. I was encased in what resembled a huge calcareous chunk of taffy candy.

This was one of my water tunnels. The earth's shake-up of last midnight had lifted it a couple of feet above the surface, and had compressed it and its contents—me.

The alligator gar hadn't been caught. He was the first living thing I saw as I started to take inventory. He was doing a little exploring himself, apparently, and seemed relieved to find that he could still swim through into the lake. The volcano hadn't cut off his supply of biscuits.

He looked at my dangling left arm—still the tentacle grafted onto what remained of my real arm—as if it might be a familiar object. Did he know me? I wondered.

As soon as I could wriggle out I swam over to the cave, under water, and the alligator gar followed, watching me very intently. He seemed to be saying, "Octopus or man, you're still very awkward in the water. Too bad you aren't a good swimmer like me."

I fed him some biscuits and then I'm sure there was no longer any doubt. He was my willing servant, as before.

Gathering together what odds and ends of equipment I could pick up, I made a simple harness for him, with a saddle that would give me some security.

The volcanic eruption had shaken part of the ceiling down. Some of the treasures of my cave, much to my regret, were sealed back of a slab of rock

that I could never hope to move. My time-bombs! I would miss them.

The diving helmets and oxygen tanks, however, had escaped unscathed. I fitted myself into a diving bell, mounted to the saddle of the alligator gar, wrapped my octopus arm around his generous waist, and off we went.

We skimmed along just beneath the surface, so that I could keep an eye on the short line. Traveling around the island in this fashion I was able to make a swift survey of the activities in all quarters.

ROCKS and rushes afforded enough hiding places that I would often stop and come to the surface, taking my chances against the sharp-eyed German scouts. To be caught would be very embarrassing. Whiskers like a hermit, the near-nakedness of a savage, an American name well known in these parts, and a freak arm for which there was no comparison in all the world. It behooved me to lie low and save my talk for the fishes.

The first exciting discovery I made was that all the captain's well laid plans had been derailed by the eruption. The high waves had pushed the German pirate ship several miles out to sea. She was now limping back slowly. A party of scouts kept wigwagging to her from an old lava mound high on the mountainside.

"Hurry back and make ready for action!" was the substance of their German messages.

The *Silver Belle* stood at anchor, having weathered the storm with no visible effects. No German party had attempted to ride or swim out to her, for the respect for the "undertow ghost" was running stronger than ever.

The "undertow ghost" had become a byword among the Americans working along the banks below the Japanese

huts. They spoke of it in guarded tones.

"Even Marcia Gregory believes in it," I heard one of a group of elderly ladies say. "But I never could believe in ghosts myself."

"No one thinks it's really a ghost," said another. "I would prefer to call it a power—a manifestation of unseen power."

"With the arms of an octopus," one of the men put in cynically. "An octopus grabs Old Man Gregory by chance. By chance he misses being blown up. Is there anything mysterious about that?"

These people gathered along the shore here were making a show of washing their clothes and camping equipment that they had brought ashore. This for the benefit of the German guards who watched from the elevations farther back.

On closer inspection I saw that the men were actually constructing log rafts. From heaps of brushwood they were extricating such bits of dead timber as could be bound together, hiding them among the rushes.

So they, too, had a plan. When darkness came again these bits would be pieced together rigidly, and a quiet exodus would be attempted.

"The undertow ghost will be with us tonight," said the lady with the unshakable faith.

I glanced at my single octopus arm, at my tanned and bleached human body. How useless I was for this crisis *in this form!*

"Marcia Gregory believes like I do," the lady continued. "She told me confidentially that somehow she *knew*."

"Knew what?" asked the skeptical man.

"That this—this ghost is helping us because it knows us and believes in us and wants to see us saved. Marcia said that whatever it is it must have a very

noble heart."

"For tonight I prayerfully hope so," said the lady who had called me a power and a manifestation.

Tonight! If I could only be an octopus again. For Marcia's sake . . . for these people . . .

"I suppose that volcano last night was the ghost again," said the cynical man. "I claim the lava caught those three Germans because they were halfway up the cone. We got off with a few minor injuries because we were down near the shore. But if you want to call it a ghost—"

"Shut up, Henry, and tend to your washing," said one of the ladies. A German guard was sauntering down the way, so she forced a blanket into her husband's hands—one that had already been washed a dozen times—and he quickly spread it over his bundle of boughs and went to work on it.

JUST before dark I caught sight of Marcia.

She walked out of the west hut looking very much like a hospital nurse on duty, for two bundles of bandages were walking with her, one on each arm.

Old Man Gregory, Dan Wanzer and Marcia—the trio who had come here looking for me. My heart melted for them. I could imagine what hope and faith had been theirs when they and all their friends embarked on this voyage. A voyage in memory of many luckless fellows like myself who had been lost in this corner of the Pacific a year or more ago.

This was a sorry plight for them. Old Man Gregory's head was bandaged, his wrist was in a sling, he was walking lamely. Danny Boy was doing surprisingly well, considering that he had recently caught a bullet.

It was a good thing that my octopus arm clung to the alligator gar with all

suction cups at that moment. Otherwise I might have yielded to that impulse. More than anything else in the world I wanted to run up the beach to Marcia.

To run to her—to hold her—to bless her for coming . . .

To hold her . . . with the arm of an octopus? No, that would never, never do.

I must wait now. My little part in this drama was over. If the Americans could work their plan—to slip back to their yacht tonight under cover of darkness, all would be well. My service now was simply to keep out of the way, to let no German suspicions be aroused.

Soon after dark I succeeded in changing my appearance in several details so that I felt more like a civilized human being. I had given myself a rough haircut and manicure. I had borrowed some clothing and a shaving outfit from the German guard camping on the quiet south side of the island.

The guard would be missed before the night was over. I need not state what became of him. I simply mention that for me the war was still going on: the missing guard would never be found.

My nakedness had been covered with the Nazi's trousers, though it made me feel like a heel to wear them. I also donned the luckless guard's military cap—a castoff from an official Nazi uniform. I might need it to get past a flashlight.

It was a starry night. My alligator gar swung far out around the east end of the island so that the flashes of the guards couldn't catch us. Good old gar was learning to respond to the reins like an Indian pony.

We approached the reeds below the huts cautiously. I slipped off and gave the gar a few taps on the fin. He obediently swam away. I crept for-

ward, keeping an eye on those tricky flashlights a double stone's-throw up the shore in either direction. It was still early and the guards were very much on the alert.

WITHIN twenty yards of the bank I stopped, held my breath. Someone was whispering only a few feet away.

"All three rafts are off, thank God!"

"We've got a long wait," someone replied in an undertone. "Gregory thinks we'll put through five trips with each raft before dawn."

"I doubt it."

"So do I. It's so damned quiet they could hardly row."

"They sure had a time getting Dan to go across with the first load. He wasn't going off and leave Marcia here. But she made him go."

"You can see who'll be the boss in the family."

"He needed to go. He needs a bed and some doctoring. I hope we can all get away in another night. We put ourselves in one helluva hole, all coming ashore."

"Marcia's whims, you know . . . Not that she had any hand in this trouble."

"Hell, no. She's innocent. Kuntz was lying. Anyone with a sense of smell can tell a Nazi lie."

"We were awful saps, though, when they asked us to lend them some radio equipment when we landed. We put our own ship's transmitter on the blink—"

A flash beam floated across the reeds and put this very informative conversation to an end.

I ducked under—my recent octopus habits were still with me. My head went under but my Nazi cap didn't. When I thought it was safe for me to loop up again, I saw that my cap was

floating away.

"Hi, there!" a German guard shouted. "What's that?"

Five minutes later three German guards were pointing flashlights at the spot where they had seen the cap go down.

Not one of them had the nerve to swim out and try to find it. "The undertow ghost" they were muttering.

They knew that cap belonged to the guard camping on the opposite side of the island, and that meant only one thing to them. The undertow ghost had claimed another victim.

The cap had gone under, incidentally, because I still knew how to play octopus. I made an underwater swim, reached up for it with my tentacles and swam on into the thick reeds before coming up for air.

With a cluster of guards baffled and temporarily out of circulation, I made my way through the darkness along the beach and up to the hut.

Marcia was in there sleeping. I had come because she was there. I only wanted to be a little nearer before she went away.

Only a little nearer. I wouldn't go in. I vowed to myself that I wouldn't go in.

A German guard trudged by and turned his light toward the open doorway. The several women were apparently sound asleep. I caught a glimpse of Marcia lying there on a blanket, her wavy auburn hair half covering her arm that served as a pillow.

The guard trudged on. Almost before his footsteps were out of hearing, two men came up quietly from the shore.

"The rafts are coming back," one of them whispered. "Who is ready to go next?"

From the low whispers that followed

I knew that two or three women were leaving to join the escape party.

"Don't wake Marcia," one of them said. "She'll go only when her father goes, and he'll wait till the last."

Five minutes later all was again quiet. I forgot my vows. I crept in and kissed Marcia.

I kissed her lips, her forehead, her eyelids.

Then her lashes trembled against my cheek. I drew away.

Softly she breathed my name. "Walter . . . Walter . . . It's you."

She was talking in her sleep. She gave a little sigh, then breathed quietly, the slow, rhythmic breathing of sleep.

"Marcia, dear," I whispered. "I love you deeply, Marcia. It was so good of you to come here to find me . . . You've found me now. Remember that when you wake up. You've found me and I've talked with you . . . I may never talk with you again, but I'll always love you . . . One thing more, Marcia . . . Your friend Dan must get well . . . and you two must be happy together. Goodbye, Marcia."

CHAPTER XV

Secrets of the Lake

MY MILITARY cap was damp upon my brow. Not only from being soaked in the ocean, but from perspiration.

Someone was approaching the hut as I came out of the door. If only starlight had not outlined my form, I might have slipped away unseen. But at that moment a guard, some distance away, chanced to swing his flashlight across my path.

Whoever was approaching ducked in time to miss the beam. But he must have had a telling glimpse of me. Very well, I would be taken for a German

guard, wearing the cap. I would hurry on. No American would dare accost me.

There I was quite mistaken.

"Careful, Dan, don't start anything," I heard one of the men call in a warning tone.

"Why do you think I came back?" the voice of Dan retorted hotly. "I knew some damned Nazi would try to molest Marcia. I didn't come a minute too soon."

I made rapid tracks west until an approaching flashlight turned me back into a thicket.

Dan's footsteps were following me, cautious and sometimes tottering, yet determined. Another warning call from one of his friends failed to turn him back. Sick or well, he was going to get the Nazi who had intruded upon Marcia.

Instinctively I felt that he was following me with a gun. He could have brought one back with him from the yacht. But surely he wouldn't be fool enough to use it.

My dodging the light of the guard ahead told Dan he was not on the trail of a Nazi.

"Halt, whoever you are!" he called in a commanding whisper. "I've got you covered."

I halted, for again the flashlight ahead forced me to cover. Dan kept coming, now on hands and knees to avoid the light. I waited, frozen like a rabbit that expects its enemy to pass. Now Dan was beside me.

His face, visible in the thin light that filtered through the thicket, showed at that moment a startling expression of aggressive courage. He was sick and in pain, but he was following me up with the tenacity of a fighter who knows what he's fighting for.

"Before I knock your head off," he whispered, "who the devil are you?

Why are you ducking the light?"

"Go peddle your apples," I said. "I'm not ducking the light. I'm looking for blackberries. Go find a thicket of your own."

I started on, and happily the guard's light shifted to another direction.

But the persistent Danny Boy was not to be shaken, and at once he blurted something that shook me to the roots.

"Sutter! . . . Walter Sutter! . . . That's who you are! I know you by your picture."

"Hussshhh! Not so loud."

"Where the hell have you been and why aren't you dead? We've looked everywhere. Why, this is terrific, to know you're still alive after all."

"You're all wrong, son," I whispered. "I'm a ghost . . . Whoo-OOO! See? Now run along like a good boy."

"How did you do it, Sutter? You did fix those blasts, didn't you? But you can tell us about all that later. The main thing now—" he was talking on so excitedly I couldn't stop him—"is to wake Marcia and tell her."

"No you don't!"

"And her father. They must know at once, so you can get in on their plan."

"Stop it, Wanzer," I said. "They are not going to know a thing. See? You're not going to tell a soul. If you do, I'll—"

MY LEFT arm accommodated me with a little gesture that put teeth in my words by massaging Dan's throat with suction cups.

"I'll squeeze the life out of you," I concluded, "with this octopus arm of mine."

"Octopus arm!" Dan gasped. He passed his hand over my left shoulder and down the spiraled length of my arm. "I—I don't understand!"

"It's a long story, and this freak arm is only the beginning. But you

realize that I mean it. Marcia mustn't know."

"Marcia mustn't know," Dan repeated slowly, incredulously.

From the shore came more ominous sounds of unplanned activities. At once Dan and I knew that the raft game was up. The Americans were slipping back through the darkness.

Dan met them; a few minutes later he returned to me with the bad news. Guards with flashlights and guns had closed in just in time to prevent the second embarkation. The rafts, abandoned, would float away.

"The night is yet young," I said. "Cheer up, Danny Boy. I've got a plan. How many guards stand between us and the lake?"

"None," said Dan. "From the rear of the huts we could make our way over a bit of foothill without disturbing a single Nazi. But what good is the lake?"

"Listen to me, Dan. I've got to talk fast. I—"

"What's wrong, Sutter? Your voice is trembling. Are you cold?"

"It's an old wound coming back. You wouldn't understand. Don't mind. Just listen—"

But Dan reached out to touch me. He gasped. "Man, your shoulders are cold, like a fish. What's happening?"

"I'm changing, Dan. There's no time to explain." If ever I talked fast it was now, for all at once I knew that my whole body was undergoing a metamorphosis unlike anything ever known in the world beyond the island.

"I'm changing," I repeated. "In a few minutes I won't be able to talk. You must follow my instructions to the letter."

"Shoot!"

"Lead your people to the innermost point of the lake. Creep along the water-line till you find the cave directly

below the point where you've seen the sign, Sutter's Lake. You'll find an immense fish waiting there to taxi you out to your ship."

"From the lake?"

"There are water tunnels leading out to the sea. You'll need to use the two Nazi diving helmets which I've left there in the cave. Do you follow?"

"You're probably crazy, Sutter, but I'll do it."

"The fish has reins and a saddle. It can manage two passengers to a trip. Twenty trips will take care of everyone."

"And if daylight overtakes us?"

"It will, but you'll keep right on going. Under water you'll not be seen."

"How the dickens will this fish know where to go? How do we know it will ever come back for a second load? What happens to the diving helmets?"

"There'll be a certain sea creature near the mouth of the cave to feed it biscuits and give it instructions. Don't worry about the fish. It will know what to do."

"If you say so. But the sea creature—is it dangerous?"

"Believe me, Danny, no. It is your friend. It's me."

"You!"

"That's another secret between us, Danny Boy. I'm trusting you to keep it."

"But—Sutter. How in the name of common sense—"

"I'm going now. See you at the lake. Don't fail—" My voice suddenly gave forth in tones of a croaking frog, then choked off completely.

"Sutter!" Dan reached out his hand to me, passed it over my mantled head and round, cone-shaped body, over four or five of my long, mucilaginous tentacles.

"Octopus!" he whispered in awe. "Octopus!"

CHAPTER XVI

"Destroy the Silver Belle"

WE WORKED the rest of the night.

It was no easy job keeping the procession going. Some of the elderly ladies had never ridden horseback. Some of the men were too scared of man-eating sharks—but Dan persuaded them that the alligator gar knew his way around.

"Take a look at his teeth and rest assured," Dan would say. "All aboard for the submarine express."

When you came right down to it, these Americans were as much afraid of that undertow ghost as they were of the wild ride in a diving helmet. They couldn't seem to understand that this undersea mount was a part of said ghost.

Dan engineered the trips on the start. I had been rather too optimistic. He had to ride over with each passenger until the business got systematized; so at first there was only one net passenger transported on each run. It was a terrific job for the gar; but his almost perpetual motion motor required nothing more than his regular biscuit.

Dan had undertaken far too much for a sick man. On the third trip he arrived at the *Silver Belle* just in time to faint, and they had to put him to bed. What he would need for some weeks to come would be rest and more rest. But he had certainly played his part like a hero.

After that Marcia herself engineered the lake end of the shuttle service. Two passengers a trip. The gar always came back on the dot with a couple of diving helmets and refilled oxygen tanks strapped to his harness.

"Whatever aquarium or zoo that fish escaped from," Marcia would say, "I'll spend the rest of my life blessing him

for what he's putting across this night."

And to my delight she also had an occasional good word for the octopus that tossed him his regular biscuit.

By dawn the Nazis began to sense a difference in their surroundings. From the American camp there was not the usual stir of activity. The guards began to run back and forth along the bank looking for traces of more rafting. There were too few prisoners this morning.

"Who guarded the launch?" the captain barked. "You're sure it never was off the bank all night long? . . . What happened on the south side? Hans is still missing, is he? And what tracks over there of rafts? . . . None at all? What's the answer? Did they swim or did they fly?"

The more Captain Kuntz tried to check up the madder he got.

The old quarrel between him and his mate was on again, and right away there was such swearing as no self-respecting crab or tender snail should be allowed to hear. I saw little fishes shudder and make for their watery caves.

Old Man Gregory and the two Americans who were caring for him appeared unable to answer any questions this morning.

Kuntz called Gregory down to the beach and I was very much afraid the old man was in for some more rough treatment.

I HAD been kept pretty busy guiding the alligator gar through the water tunnels to make sure no helmeted heads got bumped; but between each trip I had the freedom to come back and listen in on the shore conversations. So now I got in on this new threat to Gregory.

"Here's your launch," the captain growled. "You know why we won't ride over in it. But you can do what's

needed, and you'll do it just right or I won't have the pleasure of seeing you again. Your yacht is wanted by our ship. Unfortunately, we couldn't anchor in the shallow water beside you. Therefore, you're to see that your *Silver Belle* is brought up alongside *Die Welt* right away."

Gregory nodded. He understood what was wanted.

"Before you go," said Kuntz, "where's Marcia? Hiding here on the island? Or has she found a way across?"

Gregory declared that he didn't know.

"If she's already across, as I suspect she is," said the captain, "you bring her back in the launch. That way the two of you will be out of the line of fire in case there's any further trouble."

"What line of fire?" asked Gregory.

"Our ship's guns will be trained on your *Silver Belle* to make sure she obeys," said Kuntz. "I'll wigwag that order. So tell your men there'll be no funny stuff. If they start dumping any supplies overboard, we'll turn your whole tub into driftwood. That's all. Off you go."

The captain watched through glasses. I knew that he expected to see Marcia come out to the rail as her father approached.

But Marcia wasn't there. A minute or two after Gregory arrived and presumably repeated the captain's edict to his men, he swung the launch around and obediently started back.

Had he told the *Silver Belle* to follow instructions and give herself up? Would he dare defy the pirate ship's artillery?

All but three of the Americans were now across—Marcia and two others. And yet these next few minutes could see the complete collapse of all this

hard won victory.

The captain was confident. He felt it a certainty that his men would have no more trouble from an undertow ghost, once the yacht was taken over and its secret weapons smashed.

But in that very minute the undertow ghost was riding again! I caught the gar as he came through the watery channel. Back to the sea we went, for now several arms were loaded with time-bombs—those armloads I had once left on the gar's biscuit shelf.

It happened swiftly, and I couldn't have asked for more thorough-going good luck.

The loyal gar and I worked from the surface of waves on the far side of *Die Welt*. My rapid-fire arms had six bombs flying in the air before the first one came down at the base of the ship's foremost gun.

Blammm! Blammm! Blammm!

One after another I set the missiles to go off like hand grenades and not one was wasted.

Guns and men and bulwarks and a stack went flying in unpredictable directions. A weak spot appeared in the hull, and I gave it all the rest of my blasts.

Water rushed in, the ship listed, and within a minute and a half she sank.

I turned then and saw that Old Man Gregory had changed his mind about riding the launch back to the island. There was no need to commit suicide by riding back and facing the Nazis after what had happened. Ye sharks and little fishes! Those boys were in an evil mood.

CHAPTER XVII

A Dirty Nazi Lie

THE CAPTAIN was a sadly baffled man. All his starch and discipline had been shattered to sawdust.

To see him standing there with his men, standing in front of his wild-eyed pirates, all of them gazing out at the empty waves where their ship had been, gave me a new understanding of how certain European dictators must have felt when they woke up to discover there was nothing left for them to hang their flags to.

Like Mussoini and Hitler and Tojo, Captain Kuntz had assured his men right up to the last that he was about to win the big final victory.

And like the dictators when their fates were sealed, Captain Kuntz was suddenly looking for a place to jump.

If my octopus tongue could have talked I would have suggested the crater of the volcano as the most appropriate place.

But Kuntz was still playing captain. His pirates were in the habit of obeying.

I couldn't hear his orders, but I saw him making wild and frantic gestures toward the *Silver Belle*. Most of his men who had guns began spending their ammunition on the white deck.

In a moment they began to see the futility of this. They might squander all their bullets in an exhibition of brutality. But that would not bring the *Silver Belle* back to them.

When they looked around, it apparently gave them a shock of surprise to see their captain walk away from them. (Again I thought of some big-name dictators!)

Yes, obviously Adolf Kuntz had just remembered he had an appointment in another part of the island.

He was backing away, however, and he was holding a pistol ready for any emergency. Though he pretended to be watching the deck of the *Silver Belle*, and though he seemed to be backing up the mountain slope simply to get a better view, he was also avoiding the possibility of bullets in the back from

his own men.

(Even as certain dictators!)

"Keep firing," I heard him yell. He lifted his binoculars to his eyes. He moved farther along the slope—and faster.

A few minutes later I saw him again.

He was now at the water line of Sutter's Lake moving along in great anxiety, glancing back to be sure his pirate band wasn't following on his heels.

He would have welcomed a hiding place, no doubt about it.

As the alligator gar and I eased into the cove beneath Camel Point, we saw that he had been turned back by a bank of clay. I breathed a slight octopus sigh of relief to know that he wouldn't find my cave.

Marcia and two others were still waiting patiently.

With typical courage and self-sacrifice she insisted that the others go first. So she waited, half hidden among the rocks, while the alligator gar sped off with his passengers.

The inevitable happened!

MARCIA hadn't seen Captain Kuntz approaching. Her low spoken words had carried to his ears. He looked over, his face lighted with a diabolical gleam. Then he watched, hypnotized by the secret revealed.

He saw the two Americans step from the bank to the back of the giant fish, saw them adjust the diving helmets over their heads, saw them move forth into the water and sink from sight.

Perhaps the water was clear enough that Kuntz's eyes could follow the path through the wall of stones into the sea. Certainly there was no doubt left in his mind as to the Americans' route of escape.

He rubbed his hands together. He cleared his throat. Marcia looked up.

Her face went pale.

Only for an instant did she start to shrink. Then she stood before him, perfectly composed, smiling pleasantly.

"Well, Marcia, here we are alone at last," he said out of the cynical side of his mouth. He raised his eyebrows, and the nervous twitch narrowed the corners of his eyes.

"Alone? Hardly," said Marcia. "The undertow ghost is always with us. I shouldn't be surprised if this lake is full of undertow ghosts."

"The only ghost here is the ghost of your friend Sutter," said Kuntz. "Or did he die in the volcano? It doesn't matter. He's out of my way now, Marcia. Everything is in my favor."

"I suppose," she said, biting her lips with rage, "that you're going to suggest we spend a lifetime of happiness here on the island—"

"You think of the sweetest things!"

"And establish a new Nazi kingdom—"

"Marcia, you do me wrong," said Kuntz in an injured tone. "I'm not a Nazi. I've never been one. I thought you knew!"

He managed to make those words sound so convincing that Marcia turned and faced him with frank curiosity.

"I don't understand you, Adolph," she said.

"Did you see my ship blow up a few minutes ago?" he asked.

"I heard . . . and then I saw it sinking."

"That was my ultimate victory, Marcia, over those hellish Nazis I've been traveling with. You didn't think I was playing captain for them because I wanted to? I was caught with them at the close of the war, and I've been trying ever since to escape. I've brought them here simply to ditch them. And at last it's in the bag."

Marcia stared at him.

"You—you blew up your own ship?"

"Exactly. I had it all planned from the start, but I've had to wait until you and your friends could take me—"

"No, Adolph. After all your murdering—"

"You do me wrong, Marcia. Can't you see—he was bleating like a lost goat—"those deeds weren't my doing. I'm on your side. I've been there all the time. If you'll think back—"

"I can't think, Adolph. You've got me all confused. I only came here to look for Walter—"

"Think of the sacrifice I've made, Marcia, to clear myself of those Nazi rats. Last night I swam out to the ship to plant a time-bomb. I did it knowing that you'd take me back with you. You aren't going to betray me, are you, Marcia?"

"I . . . I don't know."

"Look, here it comes. The big fish with the saddle. There are the two helmets. All we have to do is get on and go. In ten minutes we'll steam away on the *Silver Belle*."

"I'm not sure, Adolph. That is, I can't realize—"

"You'll get used to me, dear."

He placed himself in the saddle, took her hand and drew her on back of him. They fastened the diving helmets over their heads.

With a slap of the reins Kuntz urged the big fish forward. Down they came into the deep waters, straight toward me.

CHAPTER XVIII

Bullets and Arms

NEITHER Adolph Kuntz nor Marcia could know, in the moment that I leaped out of a mammoth shell to spread my eight arms across their path, that they were crashing into an octopus

with a human motive.

If the little volcanic island which I had named after myself were to stand against the tides of the Pacific for a million years, some of its secrets might remain secrets still.

Sutter's Lake might never yield up its mysteries to any man.

I had become a manifestation of a power of metamorphosis which I did not understand. I had been made an octopus, I knew not how or why.

But as an octopus I knew perfectly well what I did and did not want. By every living cell in my ugly body, I did not want Captain Kuntz to ride away with Marcia.

I blocked the path of the alligator gar, and no doubt I had the look of an enemy that meant business. Captain Kuntz brought his pistol up with a flash and perforated my gelatinous body with bullets.

I gave out with a smoke screen of black ink as the gunfire cut through me. But no smoke screen could save me now. The bullets were splitting my nerves into shreds. In that instant I knew how it must feel to disintegrate. All the fibers of my being were electrified by the shock—

And reintegrated!

More swiftly than from any crushing volcano my protoplasm leaped into an old familiar form. *I was Walter Sutter, the man.* I was swimming under water, reaching out to seize a murderous gun-hand with my tentacled left arm.

Even as I hurled my strength against the strength of Adolph Kuntz I caught an instant's glimpse of Marcia's amazed face. Her trembling lips parted and I knew she pronounced my name.

I jerked the helmet off the Nazi's head. I threw my tentacled arm around his throat. Automatically the rows of suction cups tightened. We kicked to the surface. I caught my breath. His

face was purple with rage and choking. His bulging eyes begged for mercy.

I relaxed the coiled tenacle. With his first breath he cried out.

"Marcia! Marcia! Tell him I'm not—"

I threw a blow at his jaw with my only fist.

Marcia, clinging to the gar's saddle, came to the surface a few yards away. Again Kuntz cried to her.

"Marcia! Tell him I'm no Nazi. Tell him—"

I threw punches as fast as my right arm would work. His gun was gone now. But he couldn't have asked for a fairer fight. The tenacle with which I might have choked his life out was only being used to whip the water so I could indulge my right fist.

THEN gunfire broke in upon the fray, just as we locked in a clinch. This time it was the captain's body that caught the bullets.

They were intended for him. His long-time enemy, Blagg, stood on the shore, backed by a dozen or more gunmen.

"So you've never been a Nazi!"

Blagg yelled. "Vot a turn-coat captain!"

The impact of bullets came like a volcano blast. Kuntz went down, and I with him, feeling the shock of every missile that struck into his kicking, squirming body.

For a moment I thought I was changing back . . . my left arm felt so strange.

But I didn't go back to the form of an octopus. It was Captain Kuntz who made that change.

Before Marcia's eyes and mine he transformed into a shapeless, eight-armed creature—with one wounded tentacle!

As for me, Sutter's Lake had somehow treated me to the possession I had

so long missed—a whole left arm.

(That arm, as I later reflected, would have to be watched for mischievous tendencies. It looked as if it had been borrowed from Kuntz. But it was all mine now, to become subject to my will—and there was no longer a trace of the octopus about me.)

Marcia and I rode out into the sea before the men on the shore could make out what had happened. From where they stood I doubt if they realized their captain did not go down to his death.

The alligator gar must have known what changes took place, for he followed us far out into the sea, and Marcia and I, watching him from the rail, doubted whether he would ever return

to the angry group of men we left on the island!

The angry men would not lack for company, however. After our first contact with a radio station we saw to it that they would soon be visited by a company of International Police.

"Do you think they'll get hungry, waiting there on the island?" Marcia asked, as she looked back across the blue waters wistfully.

"Not a chance," I said. "There in the cave they'll find biscuits enough to last a year."

"If they should care for delicacies," said Marcia, "I suppose they could boil an octopus."

Which they probably did.

The ENIGMA OF ERIN

By
H. C. Goble

IT SOMETIMES appears that destiny has conspired to obscure the vital history of the British Isles, previous to the Christian Era. Nowhere in the world is so much tempting archaeological material, and so few real clues to correlate the entire mass of fascinating data. Facts that might change history lie hidden, just unreachable beyond the veil that covers this mysterious land.

We know that the first population of the Islands built raised dwellings over the lakes . . . stone dwellings at that . . . which stood well into the period of the Norman Invasion in 1066 A. D. Cromlechs, such as the mysteriously magnificent pile at Stonehenge, dot the Islands even today, and a stroller thru the backpaths of Britain and Ireland can still come upon untouched relics and ancient stone cairns, and uncharted caves.

All evidence seems to indicate that as long ago as the time of the Cro-Magnon on the Continent, the Island Dwellers were far advanced along the road to civilization, skilled makers of copper and ironwork. While the Nordic-appearing Cro-Magnons scrawled their cave pictures in France, a race of far-more civilized people were existing contemporaneously on the Islands, far beyond the cave stage. But who were they and where did

they go? Skeletal remains and relics are usually inconclusive, because Ireland was dominated by at least 10 ruling nations at different times . . . six of these at least even before the Christian Era. Each wave of conquest left confusion in its wake . . . and graves and barrows are quite as likely to hold the remains of one race as another. It is interesting to catalog a few of the nationalities that have ruled Irish soil for at least a time.

We know chronologically of the following.

The Firbolgs (Primitives, claimed by some to be Neanderthal men. In certain sections of Ireland, racial reversion to this simian type still occur occasionally even in civilized families of pure blood, following no fixed rule of genetics.)

The Fomorians (Primitive Carthaginian Sea Rovers who used the Orkney and Shetland Islands as raiding bases).

The De Dananns (highly-civilized Nordics, with a marvelous command of necromancy, worshippers of the Goddess Dana, or Diana).

Two widely separated waves of Scythians, from near the Caspian Sea. The first wave was driven back to Scythia by the De Dananns, and did not return till a thousand years later, during which time they had settled in Egypt during the time

of Moses, and intermarried with the Egyptians. These "Milesians" so named after their last great leader, Miled, stemmed from Gaodhal Glas, the Gaelic version of Moses. Their gradual return from Scythia by way of Crete and Egypt to Ireland, contains the same essential material as the Greek Iliad and Odyssey, for their wanderings covered a thousand years. Their last settlement was in Spain.

The above listing does not, so far as any evidence indicates, include the builders of the stone lake dwellings, the builders of the cromlechs and monoliths, or the inscribers of the mysterious rune rocks, such as were described in Machen's "Novel of the Black Seal." These people existed far before the period of the above groups, and it is probable that among these groups the legends of giants and little people had their real beginning, for even the legends handed down from the Tuatha De Danann, the ancient Nordic race, do not treat the giants and little folk as anything but a recurrence of a lost people. Later historians have repeatedly tried to prove that the De Danann, conquered by the Milesians in contemporary times, went underground completely, and that the so-called "fairy rings" of the British Isles were the exercise grounds of the De Danann underground kingdom, whence they emerged after dark . . . and that racial memory remembers their shadowy promenades as the "dances of the fairies." This is the only explanation, given by conservative archeology, of the "little people," and it will not stick. For one thing, the final conquest of the Tuatha De Danann was accomplished not much earlier than 1000 B.C., and no reference occurs in the ancient balladry of this period that even hints at such a submergence of the De Danann. Some versions give complete annihilation, others deportation, and still others indicate a truce that lasted so long that the De Danann intermarried with the Milesians (black Irish) and lost their distinctive blond characteristics.

IN CONNECTION with the destruction of Milesian Ireland as a culture, one must not miss the ancient accounts of the "Curse on Tara." It is highly reminiscent of some modern science fiction. The ancient government in power at Tara found that the priests were gaining too much knowledge, and thru this knowledge too much earthly power. In a stormy session in the Council of the Cantreds (Political Subdivisions) the priests were committed to exile . . . and vowed that a curse would come upon Tara so that not one beautiful stone should still stand upon another.

And that appears to have been what happened in a broad sense. Only in the legends of the destruction of Atlantis or the destruction of Pompeii has such quick, inexplicable violent ruin come upon a people who were basically thousands of years ahead of contemporary cultures. In 1000 B.C. occurred the final battle with the De Danann. For the next three hundred years, the courts of Ireland were the cultural centers of western civilization.

Yet the Romans in Caesar's time found nothing but ruins left. We know what happened to Pompeii and we can guess what happened to Atlantis, Pan or Lemuria. But a destruction which occurred in comparatively recent times, to a western culture, directly in contact with the British Isles to the East, linked with Scandinavia to the Northeast, and Rome and Carthage to the South, left no slightest sound of evidence as to what happened.

Something more. Enough actual graves of outsize people have been discovered in the Islands to prove that a race of giants *did* exist . . . or else a climactic factor produced giantism among otherwise normal races. Could the references to the little people be a left-over from a time when the ruling giants considered normal men "little"? It seems logical . . . for graves of little people have not been found . . . whereas a historical number of giant graves have. Or perhaps there were three races, scaled like the three bears in Goldilocks.

Lord Dunsany and other more legitimate historians, claim that no place else in the world will one find the peculiar mentality existing in the Irish, even to this day. He contends that the mental evolution of the Irish has some remarkable factors, not the least of which is the proven ability of second sight and well-founded proof of the banshee warning by disinterested investigators . . . who were with an Irishman when the ghastly little being screamed warning of an impending death in his family . . . and who witnessed that death within a matter of hours . . . in many cases without there being any reason to believe the victim would die. Only an Irishman can hear the banshee . . . but more than one witness can confirm the dire results of his screaming.

Perhaps the oddest fact about the legendry of the Celts and Gaels is that they seem distinct from the folk-lore of the continent, and that of Asia and the near east. Continental folklore is obviously slanted to the child-mind, with its overtones of wishful thinking, Cinderellas, princes on white steeds, standard model Beelzebubs, and dragons with red-hot halitosis.

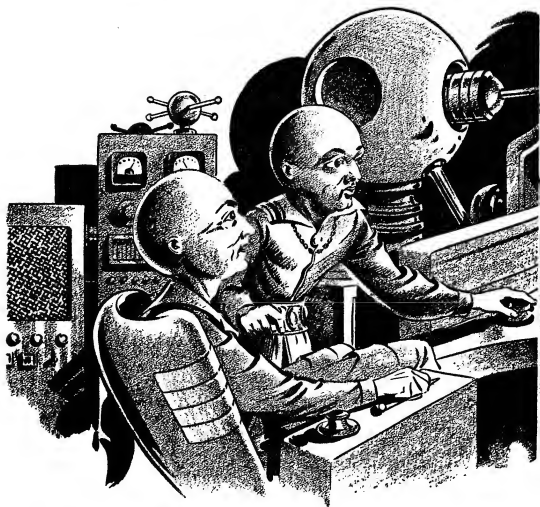
The legends of the Celts and Gaels on the other hand have a deep overtone of horror and fantasy, a mature conception of possible menaces behind the veil of the understood. Childishness in British Legend is a later characteristic, brought in by the Norman conquest. Celtic-Gaelic legends are the stories of a mature and ancient people who constantly felt themselves on the brink of conquest by otherworld forces, who actually lived their lives on the very edge of our own dimension.

And they were right . . . six times in our own historical period have people settled in this strange domain and vanished as the dust, leaving so little trace that we cannot even be sure of the existence of some of them, except by legend.

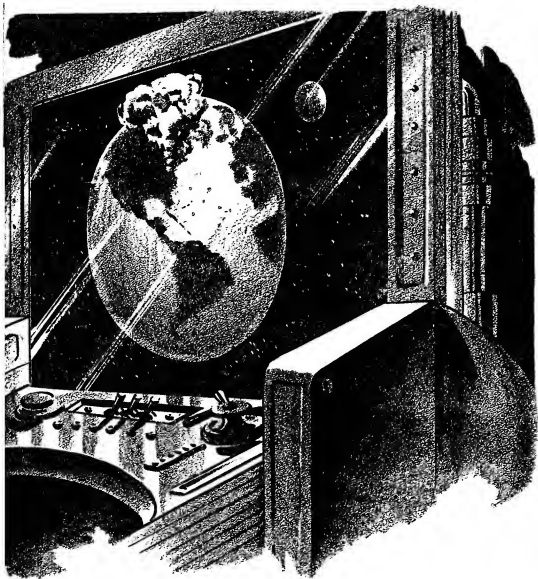
There is definitely an Irish riddle . . . it can be felt in the very air of the place, a land of dead mysteries that refuse to be buried, haunting spirits that still walk. As Dunsany so aptly puts it . . . "Only in Ireland could it happen."

Like Alarm Bells Ringing

by ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS



A brilliant flash, a huge plume of smoke, and alarm bells rang all over the solar system. Mankind had discovered atomic energy, and had put it to alarming destructive uses



There on the screen a brilliant flash and a huge mushroom of smoke blossomed out from the planet

THE youthful warden, Ve, was greatly excited. He had made a discovery of such great magnitude that he insisted on reporting personally to Lor, who was head warden in this section of the universe.

His immediate superior told him to make his report through proper channels.

"It will reach Lor in good time," his superior said. "There is no rush about such things. Take everything in its proper time and everything will be well done."

WHEN THE FIRST ATOMIC BOMB EXPLODED ON EARTH, A TREMENDOUSLY POWERFUL FORCE WAS LOOSED IN THE

UNIVERSE. WHAT ALARM BELLS WERE SET RINGING IN WHAT FAR-OFF REGIONS OF SPACE BY THE RADIATIONS FROM THAT EXPLOSION?

Ve would not listen. Proper channels were all very well for routine reports—rate of radiation from the various suns, passage of comets, explosions of super-novae, and things like that—but this was important, too important for delay. He insisted on the ancient right of all wardens to make immediate personal reports to Lor if they, in watching the worlds of space, observed anything going wrong.

His superior sighed. Ve was young, impetuous. Ve had not yet mastered the ancient wisdom that all things happen in their proper time and that really there was not much that could be done about them. But if Ve chose to invoke the right of the Watchers to make personal reports to Lor, then there was nothing to do except pass him up the line. If Lor threw him out on his ear for bothering him with unimportant trifles, Ve could charge up the experience to the high cost of wisdom.

So his superior signed the proper passes and Ve was passed up through the hierarchy of command, through the equivalent of the captains, majors, colonels, and various departmental generals until he was ushered into the presence for Lor himself.

Lor wore no insignia of any kind. Dressed all in brown, he looked much like a worker, perhaps a watcher of no more than a single star, but Ve did not need to see the five-star general at Lor's right hand and the five-star general at Lor's left hand—five-star generals being used to run errands—to know that he was in the presence of the chief of staff himself. For there was an aura of authority about Lor. He looked big, accustomed to command.

LOR was seated at his desk. There was a frown of concentration on his face as he studied the figures spread in front of him. He was so busy he did not notice Ve.

Ve waited. The five-star generals looked at him and through him and did not see him. Ve was suddenly conscious that technicians, second grade, scarcely presumed to exist in the same space as five-star generals. And he had come to see Lor, who used such generals as errand boys.

Ve, beginning to squirm as he waited, suddenly wished he hadn't come. He wished he had taken the advice of his superior and had made his report through regular channels. He squirmed and wondered if he could sneak out before Lor noticed him. He started edging toward the door.

The general at Lor's right hand suddenly became aware of his existence. "Just stay where you are," the general said.

Ve flushed. "I—I thought—"

"And keep quiet," the general added.

Ve almost swallowed his tongue in his haste to close his mouth.

Lor looked up. He looked straight at Ve.

"What do you want?" he said.

Ve saluted quickly. "Sire, I have invoked the ancient right of all watchers—"

"Otherwise you would not be here," Lor said. "What is your information? I'm busy, as you should be able to see."

Ve wished the floor would open up and swallow him.

"Sire, the vermin on Planet Three of Solar System 31,941—"

Lor blinked. It was obvious he was not really thinking about what Ve was saying. "What's that?" he said.

"The vermin on Planet Three of Solar System—"

"Vermin?" Lor questioned.

"They were so classified in the last report, Sire. That report was made by the last regular expedition to visit their planet, which was 4200 years ago. They are scheduled for full-scale inspections once every five thousand years, Sire. Possibly the next inspection report may classify them differently, but for the present they are listed as vermin."

Lor made a little gesture with his hands. It was a gesture of impatience with so trivial a thing. "That doesn't matter. The classification is probably correct. Where did you say they are located?"

"Planet Three of Solar System 31,941."

Lor looked blank again. "And where is this solar system located?" he questioned.

Ve's mouth hung open in astonishment. He had always supposed, nay, he had been specifically told time and time again in his regular indoctrination lectures, that Lor knew everything. It was a great shock to him to realize that Lor did not even know where solar system 31,941 was located, or that there was even such a solar system.

"Well, it's under the Pleiades," he said, fumbling for a way to tell Lor where this sun and its nine planets were located. "It's south of Vega, and—"

"Um," said Lor. He turned to the general on his left hand. "Bring me the star map," he said.

The general hastened from the room. He returned with the great map that showed the location of all the suns in this section of the universe. Consulting the cross-reference system, Lor finally managed to locate solar system 31,941.

"I see," he said. "Those aren't fly specks, after all. Well. The third planet out from the sun, you say? Bring me a magnifying glass."

They brought him a magnifying glass. He pored over the map for a

long time. "I see the planet now," he said at last. "It has a single moon. Well."

LOR seemed genuinely pleased to have located this solar system. It was, after all, no little thing to be able to locate a single sun and nine attendant planets situated far out in one of the less densely populated sections of the universe. That this sun was mapped at all bespoke excellent organization, which was pleasing to the chief of staff.

"Well," said Lor, looking up at Ve. "And what is there about the creatures of this planet that brings you in such great haste to make a personal report to me?"

Ve took a deep breath. This was the thing that had brought him scurrying across a quarter of the universe.

"Sire," he said. "They have discovered atomic power!"

Even though Ve was only a second grade technician he knew how important this discovery was. Atomic power was the basic energy of the universe. The race that possessed it could eventually go anywhere and do anything. Oh, they couldn't do these things right away, but once the basic discovery was made, everything else came in its turn.

The vermin on Planet Three had atomic power.

Surprise showed on the faces of the generals when Ve spoke. Even Lor looked perturbed.

"No," he said. "You must be mistaken."

"But I am not mistaken," Ve insisted. "When I felt the first blast of far-reaching radiation from an atomic explosion, I made a very close investigation. There is no question about it. They have succeeded in releasing nuclear energy and in maintaining a chain reaction in one of the heavier elements."

Ve could see how hard this news hit Lor.

"Atomic energy!" Lor said, repeated the words aloud. "That means they will soon be building space ships."

Ve nodded. "They have a moon, Sire, which they can reach with even clumsy space ships. The moon will lure them into the skies. Once they reach the moon, they will soon be able to fly over the entire solar system. After that, it won't be long before they reach us here."

"Yes," Lor said heavily. "And when they find us—"

Ve could see the question forming in Lor's mind. He shivered a little. For some reason, which he did not quite understand, he rather liked the little creatures who lived in Planet Three. Even if they were classified as vermin, they were grand in a way. Ve hated to report to Lor what he knew about them but he knew he could not avoid the question.

"Are they a peaceful race?" Lor asked.

Ve hesitated. He shook his head. "No," he said at last. "They are not peaceful. On the contrary, they are very warlike. They fight each other almost continuously, going to war for the flimsiest of reasons, or for no reason."

He could see the grim hardness settle over Lor's face at this news. Only the generals looked pleased.

"They will not reach us immediately," Lor said, looking at Ve. "Do you anticipate, from your knowledge of them, that they will have learned the ways of peace by the time they reach us?"

Ve sighed. "I have seen nothing in their history to indicate it," he said.

"Then we can look forward to the time when a new race will come brawling across space and be upon us," Lor

said heavily.

The generals grinned.

There was silence in the big office of the chief of staff. Lor was thinking about the problem that had been thrust upon the wardens of space.

VE THOUGHT about this problem too. Lor's words, "A new race will come brawling across space and be upon us," kept repeating themselves in his mind. A little by a little he began to grasp what these words meant. They meant that the vermin from Planet Three would eventually cross space. Because they were a race of warriors, they would come in great battleships, in long-ranging space cruisers. A patrol of fast scouting ships would be flung far ahead of them. There would be war.

There could be nothing but war. The vermin from Planet Three knew nothing else. As well expect the sky to fall down as to expect them to change their heritage of battle. They had fought so long with each other that fighting was second nature with them, something they accepted without thinking.

The wardens of space were peaceful. Although they still maintained a military organization, they had almost forgotten the purpose for which it was originally created. Only the generals remembered things like that. True, the wardens had great powers, tremendous powers, but if the vermin were once permitted to grow to full stature, even the great powers of the wardens might not be enough to withstand them.

"What do you suggest?" Lor spoke suddenly, looking at the general on his left.

"Eliminate them," the general promptly answered. "Before they grow strong enough to challenge us, blast their planet from the sky. A small ex-

pedition can do the job. I will volunteer to lead it."

"No!" Ve said quickly.

Lor looked at him and ignored him. The chief of staff turned to the general on his right. "What do you suggest?" he asked.

The general grinned. "I suggest we wait a while," he said.

"Why?" Lor questioned.

The general spread his hands in an expansive gesture. "If we wait, they will grow stronger. Destroying them will be more of a test for us. Of course I do not suggest that we wait until they grow *too* strong," he hastily added.

"Just strong enough to provide us with a full-scale military maneuver?" Lor questioned.

"Something like that," the general on his right answered. "I will volunteer to head a special staff to prepare plans for their destruction as soon as they are strong enough to give us a taste of battle."

"Um," Lor said. There was little pleasure on his face. He looked appraisingly at his two generals, then turned to Ve.

"I gather from your remark that you do not approve of destroying these vermin?" he said.

The two generals were looking straight at Ve. They saw him now, no mistake about that. They saw him. The looks on their faces told him what they would do to him if he dared to oppose their plans.

He took a deep breath.

"No, Sire," he said. He did not look at the generals. He looked only at Lor.

"Why?" Lor questioned.

IT WAS a question that Ve could not answer. He tried hard to find an answer. He thought of the little creatures on Planet Three. In going about his duties, he had from time to time ob-

served them closely. He had seen them do many fine and brave things. He had seen them come up out of nothing and face a hostile planet of huge beasts, of green tangled wildernesses, of scarred, deadly deserts. He had seen them face the cold of the ice caps, the dark horror of the great seas. He had seen them do these things, knowing that the beasts would kill them, that the jungle would strangle them, that the ice caps would freeze them, that the deserts would burn them. He had seen them face death in a thousand forms without flinching. To Ve, there was something grand about that, something grand about the way they kept on trying, something grand about the way they never gave up.

But that was not the reason he did not want them destroyed, or not the only reason. And he knew the generals would not accept this reason. For unquestionably vermin with atomic power were dangerous vermin. Ve shook his head.

"I do not know the reason, Sire," he said.

"Destroy them now," the general of Lor's left urged.

"Wait a while and then destroy them," the general on the right said.

"I do not know whether we can destroy them," Lor answered.

"Eh?" the surprised generals said in chorus. "We have the power."

"More is involved than power," Lor said. He turned back to Ve.

"Tell me," he questioned, "Did they discover atomic power for themselves? Is it their own discovery, a secret they have taken from nature by their own intelligence and their own strength, or did they have help in making it?"

Ve could not see the purpose of this question. The generals could see its purpose for suddenly both of them looked at Ve.

"They had help in making the dis-

covery," the generals said. "That's right, isn't it? They had help."

"No," Ve said. "They had no help. They discovered it for themselves."

Lor looked up at his two generals. "Then that answers your question, gentlemen. If they made the discovery themselves, then we cannot destroy them merely to protect ourselves. There is a law of the universe which says that a race or a species that makes an advance by its own intelligence, by its own strength, is not to be destroyed merely because of the discovery it has made. Otherwise, evolution would stop in the worlds of space."

The generals looked very unhappy. "Surely the law does not hold for vermin," one of them suggested.

"The law holds for life in every form," Lor answered. "Remember, there are wardens who watch over us just as we watch over the creatures under us. If we break their law, we doom ourselves."

Lor shook his head. There was finality in the gesture.

Ve stared in wonder at his chief. Here was high policy that he did not even begin to understand. He knew, of course, that there were higher powers than the wardens in the universe but he had not thought these higher powers were interested in vermin. It seemed they were. It seemed their protection extended all the way down the scale of life, helping even the creatures on Planet Three.

Ve felt better. Immediate destruction was out. That was certain. Lor had said so.

"We may not take action against them," Lor continued. "The law protects them. But the law also provides certain protections for us too, sets up certain safeguards. In the centuries that must elapse before the vermin reach us, these safeguards will have ample time to operate."

HIS fingers drummed on the desk top, beating an impatient, worried, and fretful tattoo. The discovery of atomic power gave him a tremendous problem to solve. He was forbidden to destroy the creatures who had made the discovery but if he did not destroy them, he would eventually have to fight them.

Lor looked at the general standing on his left. "Prepare the probability-scanning equipment for immediate operation," he said. "Have the operators focus on this planet where the vermin are evolving. Although we may not destroy them now, before they have had a chance to develop the discovery they have made, we can at least learn whether or not we will have to destroy them in the future. Time to develop the law allows them. If they do not use that time to advantage, then we may eliminate them on the grounds of unfitness."

"Yes, Sire," the general answered. "At once, Sire."

As the general tip-toed from the room, Lor turned to Ve. "We will examine the various future paths this race may travel," he explained. "We will see if the safeguards operate. As a reward for your diligence in reporting the discovery of atomic power, you may come with us and see what the future holds in store for the vermin on Planet Three."

VE FOLLOWED Lor in that section of headquarters where the probability machine was located. He had never seen this machine but he knew the theory on which it operated. Put into simple words, it was a machine that revealed the futures. Not the *future*, the *futures*, the different paths that a planet, a race, or an individual might follow.

As they entered the big room where the futures machine was located, Ve

was aware of a vast bustling and scurrying going on around him. This machine was not often used. Now that it had been ordered into action, harried technicians were trying to get it ready for operation. Great banks of calculators were being energized and checked. Delicate electronic balances were being tested. Frantic librarians were assembling the necessary information on Planet Three of Solar System 31,941, information that had to be fed into the great machine before it could calculate and compute the various futures open to the planet and to the race that inhabited it.

"We're ready, Sire," a puffing general reported. "If you will step into the viewing room—"

When they were seated in the viewing room all lights were turned off. The blackness here was utter and complete. All light, all radiation of any kind, was shielded away from this room, including even cosmic rays.

"We have already determined that Planet Three of Solar System 31,941 has three major possible futures," the voice of a technician said in the darkness. "There may be others but we have discovered three major potentialities, three paths the planet may take to the future. Path one will now be explored."

There was a soft click in the darkness and a reedy whirring sound that went rapidly into silence. Ve knew that from the futures machine penetrating currents of etheric force were leaping out across space, moving at many times the speed of light, and were scanning Planet Three. These beams of force were weighing, measuring, the whole solar system and were bringing back data to the machine.

In the front of the room the blackness faded. A picture began to form there, a picture of a sun and nine little at-

tendant planets done in miniature. As projected by the futures machine, the solar system looked like a pretty toy, a plaything that might delight a child, but Ve knew that this was only a picture and that the reality was vastly different. He had seen that toy sun close up. He knew the tremendous radiation flowing from it. Although it looked like a child's plaything here on this screen, Ve knew how tremendously huge it was off there across the untracked depths of space.

"Path one now forming," the voice of the technician droned.

Movement was visible in the little solar system. The movement quickened, speeded up, at the machine began to telescope time in reaching for the probability pattern of this system.

Then the solar system was gone and only one planet was revealed on the screen, Planet Three.

PLANET THREE floated in space, a round, beautiful ball. Enlarging on the screen, the deep blue of its seas became visible, the brown of its deserts, the green of its fertile valleys and plains. The white polar caps sparkled under the rays of that far-off sun.

It was a beautiful sight. Ve stirred restlessly under the pressure of that beauty. Even Lor, sitting so quietly and watching so intently, seemed impressed by the beauty of the scene.

Time on the planet was passing quickly. Years were going by like seconds. Ve watched closely for signs of activity.

It happened too quickly for activity to start.

There was a blinding flash of light. The screen suddenly blazed in an inferno of which brilliance as Planet Three exploded.

A nova flared in the sky.
Ve forgot to breathe.

The screen went blank.

Lor moved in his chair. "That is one possible future," Lor said slowly. "After discovering atomic power, they begin to experiment with the lighter elements. They set off a chain reaction, probably involving the hydrogen atom, that blows up the entire planet."

One possible future of Planet Three was disintegration. Whether or not that future came to pass depended on the way the inhabitants used the new power they had discovered. If they used it one way, they blew themselves and their planet out of the sky almost before they got started.

"The possibility of blowing up their own planet is one of the safeguards I mentioned," Lor continued. "If they follow that path to the future, we need never fear them."

But would they follow that path?

Ve did not know what path they would follow, nor did any of the wardens know, not even Lor himself. This path was only a potential future, something that might happen, could happen. There were other paths.

Again the whirring sound came and again the nine little planets and their sun glittered on the screen like beloved toys in which a child might take delight.

"Probability path two," the voice of the technician droned.

Ve watched closely.

Planet Three enlarged on the screen, as beautiful as ever. There was movement in the air over the planet. Ve strained his eyes to see what was happening.

"War!" Lor whispered.

Then Ve saw what the movement was. Hosts of ships were moving through the air. Far-flung sky battles were taking place. He saw tiny midges lock in mortal combat and destroy each other. He saw cities go out of existence.

He saw the war end.

One by one the little ships left the air. The cities ceased disintegrating.

Ve waited to see what would happen when the war ended.

He waited and waited.

Nothing happened.

"Move the focus closer," Lor ordered.

On the screen the planet enlarged as the technicians obeyed the order.

Ve saw what had happened.

PLANET THREE was dead. The ruins of the cities stared tenantless at the empty sky. The highways were deserted. The fields were bare.

The streams ran, the oceans sparkled in the sun, the winds blew, the ice caps glistened, but there was no life visible on the world. No life of any kind.

No animals moved, no vegetation grew in the soil.

"I see what happened," Lor said. "They released a radio-active gas, trying to kill their enemies. The gas was dispersed through the whole atmosphere and it killed every living thing on the planet. One important product of atomic disintegration is radio-activity—"

Ve knew how deadly were radio-active emanations to the people of Planet Three. They had fought a war and had made their entire atmosphere radio-active, thus destroying themselves.

"If they follow the second path, we need never fear them," Lor said quietly. "Our safeguards hold."

The little world spun lifeless in the quiet sky. Eventually, when a thousand centuries had passed, the radio-active gases would die out and life would appear again, to begin the long evolutionary process all over again.

But that would take thousands of years.

"There are other paths," Ve said hopefully.

The eagerness in his voice revealed he was hoping the inhabitants of Planet Three would take another path, would choose another future, and save themselves from destruction.

"The technician said there was at least one other major possible future," Ve said.

In the darkness he was aware that Lor was looking at him.

"I believe," Lor said, "I believe you are secretly hoping they will succeed in controlling atomic power and will eventually come against us here."

"No," Ve said hastily. "Nothing like that."

Secretly he hated to see those little creatures, even if they were classified as vermin, destroy themselves and their world. And now he knew why he did not want to see them destroyed. They appealed to him because of their daring!

They dared hold the atom in their hands! Knowing it might destroy them, they still dared to hold it in their hands and seek its secrets. This was a great thing. Such daring and such bravery should not perish from the universe!

"Path three now forming," the technician said in the darkness.

Again the sun and its planets danced in the sky.

Ve held his breath. Here was another path they might take to the future. Would they escape destruction if they took this path? Ve did not know but he was almost afraid to watch.

Again war blazed through the air of the planet, grim, hideous, blasting, totalitarian war.

"Will they never learn?" Ve writhed, speaking the words unconsciously. "Will they never learn to avoid war? Will it always remain a part of their culture pattern? Won't they ever learn that war and atomic power won't mix?"

Along path three lay war.

THE focus was brought close in and Ve watched the destruction commence. He saw proud cities flare brightly into destruction, he saw the rain of death from the sky, he saw the great gaping holes torn in the tortured crust of the planet as atomic missiles sought for cities that had been buried underground. He waited, wondering how they would destroy themselves this time.

The atom could be mishandled in so many ways! There were so many things that could go wrong with it!

Lor called the things that could go wrong with the atom safeguards, and from the viewpoint of the wardens, from the viewpoint of the great race that watched space, they *were* safeguards, but from the viewpoint of the little people who inhabited Planet Three, the safeguards were pitfalls leading to sudden death, to swift destruction.

Ve watched, and did not dare to breathe.

The war ended.

The planet was not destroyed.

There was not a city left standing. The population had shrunk to a quarter of what it had been before the fighting started, invaluable natural resources were gone forever.

But the war was done.

And Planet Three was still in the sky, and still inhabited. True, many of the vermin were dead, but enough of them were left alive.

Ve was aware that Lor was very uneasy now.

He was aware that the generals were very alert.

The safeguards of the wardens had failed. The inhabitants of Planet Three had avoided the pitfalls, they had neither blown up their world or

destroyed themselves.

Holding the atom in their hands, they had learned how to control it.

Lor was uneasy about that.

Telescoping time ran swiftly on the screen, revealing the future of this race, revealing one possible future.

The race began to build anew.

They built no cities. They lived in small groups, they seemed to control their numbers so that they did not outstrip their food supply. And they got along together!

They didn't fight any more.

They built.

Ve saw them begin to build space ships.

He saw the first wobbly ship take off from the planet.

The technicians, swiftly changing the focus of the futures machine, followed the flight of that space ship.

Ve saw the ship land on the planet's moon.

He knew, then, that the first step had been taken.

He knew why Lor was so very uneasy now, why the generals were so alert.

Path three led to the conquest of space, it led eventually to the dwelling places of the wardens.

Telescoping time revealed landing places built on the moon, regular traffic established, great supplies of new raw materials, ores of all kinds, tapped on the satellite.

Now this race had adequate supplies.

SPACE ships began to take off from the moon. They began to fly to the planets. They flew in peace through the reaches of space.

"That's enough," Lor said. "Stop the machine."

Lights flared up in the room as he rose to his feet. Ve and the generals followed him out of that section of supreme headquarters where the fu-

tures machine was housed, back to his office.

Lor went to the window of his office and looked out.

His window opened out on space, on the vastness of the nothingness that lay between the worlds. Lor stared at this space, saying nothing.

Ve's mind kept returning to a central thought.

Finally he spoke.

"Which path will they take, Sire?" he timidly asked.

There was silence in the big room.

"I do not know," Lor answered. "They must choose the path themselves."

The silence was heavy then.

"But I think," Lor suddenly spoke again. "I think we had better prepare to receive visitors some day."

Ve's heart leaped at the words. "You think, then, that they will take path three?"

"I think they will," Lor answered.

The generals became excited. "Then we must prepare our defenses," they said.

"No," said Lor.

They looked at him in astonishment. "We need no defenses," he said. "The only path that leads to us, is, after an initial period of conflict, a peaceful path. All other paths lead to destruction. The only path that ever leads to us is the path of peace. We need no defenses against people who come in peace."

The generals were silent.

Inside, Ve was suddenly very happy. Those little people who dared hold the atom in their hands, there was hope for them yet.

"We will make preparations to receive them," Lor said. "They will come to us, in peace, when they have mastered both themselves and the skyways of the universe."

There was something of prophecy in the rolling tones of his voice.

"Who knows?" Lor said. "Perhaps in some future time they may take our places here as wardens of this section of the universe while we go on to greater glories. That, I think, is their

destiny."

His voice went into silence. He was silent. The generals were silent. Far off across vast depths of space the vermin of Planet Three worked on their atomic bomb.

THE END

« « SCIENTIFIC ODDITIES » »

By LYNN STANDISH

Science uncovers more of these "true" oddities every day!

IN THE Leningrad Museum of Natural History stands the huge prehistoric mammoth, an animal which viewed the world of the Ice Age, and was preserved in natural cold storage until its recent discovery in 1901. It was found in the cold Siberian wasteland by some curious native dogs which had been attracted to the scene of the mammoth's imprisonment by the odor of decaying flesh. Dr. Atto Hertz, the eminent Russian zoologist, was called to the scene to direct the excavation and preservation of this spectre out of the past.

He estimated the animal's age to be at least hundreds of thousands of years. During the Ice Age these huge elephants lived near the advancing and retreating glaciers, never getting far away from the edge of ice. Doubtless the mammoth had fallen into a deep snowdrift in a crevice of the glacier, for the pelvis and right foreleg were broken. Struggling in the bottom of the chasm, it pulled down tons of loose snow and literally packed itself in ice where it remained frozen through the ages until part of the covering earth broke away.

The gigantic beast was in a marvelously preserved state. It was covered with woolly yellowish fur under a thick outer bristle-like coat. Some of the hairs were fourteen inches long. Most of the body was solidly frozen; the meat looked as fresh as the beef in the shop of the butcher around the corner. None of the men ventured to taste it, but the dogs devoured chunks that had been thawed and suffered no ill effects as a result. The layer of fat beneath the skin was white, odorless, and four inches thick. In the stomach were twenty-seven pounds of undigested food—fir cones and bits of larch, fir, pine, sedge, wild thyme, several flowers, and two kinds of moss. Its frozen blood looked like small bits of potassium permanganate which when melted turned into dirty dark red spots.

Under the direction of Dr. Hertz, the mammoth was skinned and much of the internal anatomy was transported on ten sledges nearly 2000

miles over the snow to Irkutsk on the Trans-Siberian Railroad. There it was reconstructed and put on display so that an awestruck public could look and ponder about this wonder out of the past.

* * *

HIDDEN in the briny deep is a strange monster that looks and acts something like a bomb with a fat fuse attached to it. This fish is a living electric battery for it is actually equipped with a system of electric storage cells. These are situated on each side of his big circular body near the head and consist of a group of prism-shaped compartments of muscular fiber running perpendicularly through the body of the fish. The upper side of the torpedo is the positive pole of the battery, the lower side the negative. When he is out of the water, the torpedo must be touched at two distinct points before the circuit is complete and the shock received. But in the water, which is an excellent conductor of electricity, only one point of contact is necessary. Sometimes an ocean fisherman reaching into his net will get a shock that almost paralyzes his arm.

The torpedo-fish, which belongs to the general family of skates and rays, can turn on his own current whenever he pleases. The "shocking" apparatus is not only used by the torpedo-fish to defend itself, but to stun and kill the smaller animals on which it feeds. If it were not for this, he would probably starve to death, for he cannot move very fast, nor are his teeth and small mouth suited for catching or biting his prey. This fish is round and flat, with a stout tapering tail to which the fins are attached. His body is smooth and soft to the touch. The largest species is found on the Atlantic coast from Cape Cod south, some of them reaching four feet in length and weighing nearly two hundred pounds. Swimmers in southern waters occasionally strike one of these creatures with their feet, and many mysterious cases of drowning are attributed to the crippling effect of such electric shocks.



"It's a woman-tree," she said. "Remember that time you dreamed that one up?"



The MIND ROVERS

by RICHARD S. SHAVER

**What about the world of imagination
in your own mind? Is it just fantasy, or
is there something real in its existence?**

"**D**ID you hear about Bill?" I said to Shaky, my pal, sitting on the prison yard sand beside me.

"Yeah, Butch I heard he died last night. I tried to tell him he couldn't work it that way." Shaky's hands beat their usual accompaniment to his speech.

"Couldn't work what?" I looked at Shaky quizzically. "Couldn't die? Hell, he worked that all right."

"That ain't what I meant. He thought he had a way out of here; and he wouldn't listen to me. Now the embalming fluid will get him." Shaky's jerking hands reached between the bars of the cell window in the wall behind us, managed to grasp a bar, and he pulled himself to his feet. I began to think about the bars. Everything about a prison seems to be related to bars, after you have lived among the bars

awhile. Take the prison nights, for instance.

The iron bars seemed to me like the nights I spent here, as cold and black and foreboding. The empty spaces between the bars were empty as my days between the iron-black nights were empty.

The endless corridors of the place smelled of death, of antiseptic, of sick men, of dirty blankets—an ugly smell that you never find anywhere except in prisons and hospitals. In bad ones, that is.

The sounds of the place were as monotonous and as maddening to a long-timer as were the bars at the windows. The slow pacing of the guard at night, flashing his light in each cell just long enough to wake a man up. The chittering of the birds roosting outside on the grounds. The low mutter of a couple of weary prisoners whiling away the

long hours and breaking the rules with their talk. And even that could be dangerous, here, if they were laying for you. And one never knew.

In the daytime the sounds were as monotonous. The idle hum of the prisoners' talk, while pulling strings from the burlap for the rugs. Or the sharp scuffle of a beating for one who refused to work. Some guys never learn where they are till they have a couple or three beatings.

Shaky was my pal. I could talk to Shaky. I never felt that Shaky would repeat anything I said that would get me into trouble. That ain't always true of cons. Some of 'em, seemingly all right, will gab their mouths off if you tell them something that you shouldn't. Stir makes a guy funny. Anything that breaks the monotony is hard to resist. But some guys like Shaky keep a firm inner fibre in spite of Hell. And Shaky had lived a Hell. Shaky's hands were never still, always shaking, in an endless dance. A kick in the back from a guard, after he was knocked down, had left him with an injured spine—and the nerves kept his hands jumping forever. But Shaky could understand. He had suffered enough to know what was what in this world of misery. Put a cigarette in his mouth and light it, and Shaky made a first class audience. But today Shaky was doing the talking.

"This Bill was a lifer, just like you and me, Butch. He looked like you, too, if you ever noticed. A big, tall fellow, as strong as you, but not as lean in the hips—more of a German build. Bill was stubborn, too. He just couldn't accept the idea that he had to stay here the rest of his life. He was always beefing that he was in on a bum rap—framed—just the same as you. Of course, he didn't understand that half the guys here hadn't ought to be here

if there was any justice. He didn't understand that lots of prisons and hospitals are just graft coops, to keep guys as long as possible and get the board money from the State. He was plenty sore. He figured and he figured, all the time, just like you do, with a frown between his eyes just like yours—and the same thought in his bull head—how to get out of here. But nobody breaks out of here. You know that. When they do, they always bring 'em back in an ambulance. It ain't the right kind of country for a stranger to hide in."

"Shaky," I says, "I don't want to hear about some other con's troubles. I got enough of my own."

"Yeah, I know, fella—but this guy *found an answer!* That's why I'm telling you! I don't suppose you'll believe me—you'll just think old Shaky has blown his top for good. But you can ask the other old-timers like me here. They'll tell you the same story, except they don't know the details like I do. They can't tell you the whole story, like I can."

SHAKY fumbled around with his cigarette with his dancing hands, burned his fingers. I took it out of his mouth and threw it away. Shaky went on talking:

"Bill was my pal, too, same as you are now, 'til he took to sleeping himself to death. He was a guy an awful lot like you, but not as smart. Same kind of faraway blue eyes, and reddish hair always needing a comb, and a comb never doing any good. He always had time to roll me a cigarette, too. I didn't have to ask him like I do you. He just rolled me one every time he rolled one for himself. Naturally I got in the habit of listening to his beefin' and sympathizing with him. You can't walk off on a guy like that when he needs some-

one to listen to him. And I learned plenty from him."

I snorted. Maybe Shaky was losin' his mind.

"You mean to tell me he found an answer to the problem of getting away from the racketeers that run this man-coop? The only guys they ever let go are dyin' or crazy—and they ship the crazy ones over to their nuthouse. The government sure can hand out dough to such guys for destroying liberty—in the name of the law. Half the guys in here ought to have been paroled long ago—if they got their 'good-time.' * You don't get good-time or parole from this outfit. The only favor our government could do us would be to cut down the appropriation for board for prisoners. If the Racketeers didn't make so much out of this boarding house they might not worry so when they had to release a man. I know my way around, but the only way I can figure out of here for a con is 'dough re mi' and plenty of it. If I could give one of the guards a big enough hunk of dough, out I'd go one night."

Shaky shook his head, as well as his hands. It wasn't funny to watch Shaky shake all the time and know that a kick from some dumb guard had made him that way. Shaky went on with his story.

"Look here, Butch, I know all that. Ain't I been waiting all this twenty years for somethin' to happen to help me out of here? My parole is so many years overdue I forget *when* I was supposed to exit any more. Ain't I been in their nuthouses and in two of their other profitable boarding houses? Well, that's what I'm trying to tell you—*Bill found a way out* of here! I can't use it, but maybe you can. You remember

Bill, all right; you were over on cell block 7, when he was in the cell next to me. Bill kept figuring and figuring, and finally it seemed to touch his brain. I though he was stir-crazy, and imagining things—but I learned different. I always thought there wasn't any way, out—sick or well, rich or poor, sentence up or a lifer like you and me—they always find a way to keep you here. When a guy's time is up they pick a fight with you and give you some more time for bad behaviour or say you're a dangerous maniac and ship you off to the nuthouse. I never knew how bad a crook could be till I got into prison. Then I found out crooks were running the place."

"All right, but what about Bill. I know all about the racket that robs us of our lives. How did Bill beat the racket?"

SHAKY went on in his own unhurried way.

"Bill died, in truth, about a year ago when he fell asleep and they couldn't wake him up. He was a good fellow with a heart as big as all outdoors—but he couldn't stand this life, and it make him bitter and irritable. But who the hell *can* stand it?" Shaky squinted at me in the sun—then went on:

"Well, I thought he went nuts. Maybe he did, but after what happened I ain't so sure. He started to tell me about his dreams. Every night he had a habit of making himself dream the same dream. Sorta like day-dreaming, only Bill always fell asleep doing it. Lots of long termers do that—get in the habit of dreaming the same dream, with variations."

Shaky's hands beat a steady weird rhythm accentuating his words. Shaky's hands always were a barometer of his emotions. When he got intense or in-

* Good-time. Most prisons have a system of granting a reduction of sentence for good behavior, called 'good-time' by prisoners.—Ed.

terested, they beat faster according to the amount of his excitement. Just now his hands were beating faster and faster, meaning he was getting excited.

"Then one morning the big fellow didn't wake up. No, he wasn't dead—he just wouldn't wake up. Remember—that was nearly a year ago."

"That *is* funny, I said. "Wasn't there anything the matter with him: That's the way sleeping sickness takes 'em. Didn't he have it?" I lit Shaky's butt.

"No," Shaky's hands beat faster and faster. "He was as healthy as anyone. He slept straight through for four days and the docs did everything to wake him up. But when he got ready, he woke up himself. 'Twan't nothin' they did. He just woke up himself."

"Well, what about it?"

"That's what I'm getting to, see. He found the answer to getting out of here. That's why I'm telling you so careful, so you'll understand what I mean. Because it's the only way you'll ever get out of here, with the rap they got hung on you. He found another world in his sleep. He told me all about it!"

"Aw, Shaky, you're going bats yourself. Whatta' ya' mean he found another world—what are you saying anyway?" I was disappointed in Shaky's nonsense.

"Well, he found a way to get into another kind of world. Not anything like this world. He told me all about it. The dream he always dreamed was about such a world—one he thought he made up himself, half asleep. But he didn't make it up—he just found a way of looking in. A woman would come to him and talk to him, and sometimes in his sleep she would take him into the place where she lived and they would make love and have a hell of a good time. Well, now the big screwball claimed he found a way to stay

there. Seems his woman in the dream fell more and more in love with him, so at last she decided to take him into that world to stay. I thought the big guy was just plain stir-crazy—but he told me he was going back that same night to stay for good."

"Are you trying to tell me he wasn't stir-crazy? I'm beginning to doubt whether you're all there yourself. That guy was crazy as a bed-bug."

"That's just what I thought, Butch. I looked at him same as I'm looking at you, and he looked just like you, cool and sneering a little, and damn tired of everything on this green, deceitful earth. And that night he went to sleep and he NEVER woke up again!"

"He never woke up?" I heard my own voice repeating Shaky's words—"He never woke up again!"

"No, and he died still sleeping a year later! They fed him through a tube and did every damn thing to wake him up, but nothing doing. He just liked dreaming better than living."

"SEE here, Shaky, are you trying to tell me to try and do what Bill did?"

"Well, you're my friend and I like you. I ain't so dumb. I know it won't hurt you any just to try this stunt. Maybe there is such a way out of life. That place would be the world where dreams come from. According to Bill our dreams are just the smoke of that world drifting through our heads. But I don't think Bill understood where the place was. I think it must be the world of the small—the inside of his own head. It just couldn't be any other place. After I listened to him talk about it day after day, I had a few ideas of my own about it."

Shaky looked up at me from the sand of the prison yard, pleading for me to listen and not think him nuts.

So I said: "Go on, Shaky—I'm listening." Hell, there wasn't anything else to do, except stand around and cuss.

"Well, I think the trick of going there is to think about it till they know all about you from hearing you all the time. I think your mind dreams up a body for you in that world that exists inside your own head. I think that *our thought exists in the same way we do*, as actual things and people in a living world of their own—different—but still a kind of life. I think inside your mind is a sort of experimental model of everything you ever knew. A kind of half-alive model of every person you ever knew. Down there everything has to do just what you—the big fellow—wants it to do. That's why Bill liked it so much. Everything did exactly what he wanted, like magic."

Shaky gave a sad cackle of a laugh.

I said, "What's funny? I didn't hear anything funny."

"I was just thinking what musta happened to Bill and his dream world when they SHOT THE EMBALMING fluid into him." And Shaky went on laughing kind of sad-like till I started to walk off.

"Come on back, Butch, I wanta finish telling you about this. You ain't got nothing to do anyway. And roll me another ciggy. You ain't got the heart not to. You always do that for me."

I rolled a Bull Durham and popped it in his mouth and lit it. He went on:

"When you ain't lookin', the thought world goes ahead and does what it wants, just like we would like to, here. But when you're thinkin' they all have to do what you want. That's the way dreams are, if you know much about 'em. When you don't watch 'em, anything happens, but when you look—it happens your way. Anyway, see for yourself whether Bill's words were true or not. *If it ain't true* and Bill was

just plain crazy—you *won't lose any sleep over it anyway.*"

Shaky broke into another endless cackle at his joke on me, and I knew he had called me back just to crack that on me. But as I walked off I decided to try the thing just for the fun of it. Maybe Shaky wasn't lying to me.

Certainly there was no way for a lifer to get out of here. To a desperate man even a spiderweb of hope like this mad dream stuff can take on the aspect of a rope ladder over the wall. I could hear Shaky's shrill whisper above the chatter of the other cons:

"But don't tell anybody I said a word to you about it—they'd only think I was crazy."

I called back: "Don't worry, Shaky." As I looked back at him I could see his poor jerking hands. They had slowed down to the normal jitter again. Strangely, his hands had corroborated his seriousness—Shaky had meant what he said. I knew Shaky's hands.

THAT night I drifted off to sleep on the hard bunk—willing myself to dream. Night after night I willed myself to dream that dream over and over. Steadily that picture of the witch-woman I had always thought the ultimate in vamps grew clearer, more vivid. Every night I seemed nearer to realizing the strange thing that Shaky had been trying to tell me:

"There is another door out of here—and it isn't really death."

Every day I talked it over with Shaky, reporting my progress. He would advise me:

"See, when you meet people in that dream, you've got to win their affection, their confidence. That's why the big fellow, Bill, made it—he was good-looking and the woman fell for him. I tried it and the people don't really want me around. I look like Hell in a dream,

worse than I do now. That place is a world where thought is reality—and if they don't want me, I know it and don't want to go—and I can't change my own mind, can I? But a good looking guy like you, why you'll get plenty of help on the thinking from them, and what you want will happen."

So, after listening to Shaky I would go back to my bunk and cork off again. And there she would be, my woman. She looked as beautiful as a vampire is supposed to look. But she wasn't really a vampire at all, she was just built the way I dreamed of her, too beautiful to be good.

The dream-woman's hair was red, like a fox's fur, but soft like the fur of a red mouse. Her skin was white, a too-soft white, and a slight flush wavered like a pale flame over her face. Her lips were heavy and dark, parted and panting a little. Her white teeth glistened; too perfect they were, like little squares in the center, larger white canines in the corners of her mouth. Her hair moved strangely, that soft furry hair that called for stroking. She stood just beyond the wall of my world of sleep, its softly glittering curtains parted and held in her hands, ready for me to step through when I asked. Beyond I could see a misty other world, a place of soft mists and sensuously moving forms that told me there was mighty pleasure waiting for me, as well as strange mystery and terrible danger. She was only a dream, yet I was going to her and freedom.

At last she drew the shining curtains wide and I heard her voice—an iridescent flow of thought-force from her head.

"Time has been long, waiting. Come, freedom calls. Wake up, walk!"

It was a strange world of release into which I passed. About me were terrific growing thought forms that I

could not grasp. Were they trees, animals, or rooted plant animals? I asked her now, standing behind me, watching my wondering inspection of everything about.

"What are all these strange things? They look alive. And—who are you?"

"My name is Mena. And don't call me Minny. The 'things' are thought forms of your own brain. They were long ago discarded by your conscious thinking; but down here things do not die. They live on, and grow in their own way. When they mature, and spore the air, new and strange thoughts will grow in your mind—which you will think if you return to your mind."

"If I return," I muttered. "I sure don't want to." Then louder, to her, I said: "But you look something like a vampire. You don't act like one. How come?"

"You don't remember me very well, Butch. But I know you. I am not a vampire, for you wanted your vampire wise enough to be lovable. And I'd look silly running around sucking blood out of things, wouldn't I?"

"I suppose you might, at that." I answered weakly. This dream wasn't exactly in my hands.

But she went on. "You created me years ago, dreaming of De Maupassant's *Vampire Love*. So I am wise as she was wise, wiser than any woman you have ever known in your life. You made me that way with your will. I know this world. You don't. So listen to me and do exactly as I say and I may be able to release you."

SHE was talking, and I was listening.

She was a normal woman, all right. I was taking the orders, I knew that right away.

"It will be hard, for you must not die, or this world will become a very unpleasant place. Particularly when

they embalm you."

I was getting tired of being embalmed. First Shaky and now, this Mena.

"Look here, don't talk about embalming! I think I remember you now. When I first dreamed you up, a long time ago, you loved me passionately. Do you still love me?"

She smiled a secret smile that didn't tell me a thing.

"I'd rather not answer that. After all, I hardly know you—" and when she smiled, two dimples appeared in those soft, flushed cheeks. A vampire with dimples. It beats all what a guy will dream up. And now, face to face, and telling me what to do next! Well, I'd better listen. After all, I didn't want to get embalmed.

She took me by the hand and led me off into the rustling dark. Instead of following the light we kept out of it so that the moon dappled us, but did not lay upon us. As we passed some tree-like growths I noticed one that brought me to a wondering halt. It gave off an overpoweringly strong scent, a musky supersensuous odor of indescribable allure. It was a loose pyramid of slowly writhing branches, bearing great green buds—and in the buds were the sleeping forms of women. The legs grew out of the huge bud sheaths. I stopped in awe of the thing with my mouth wide open. They were of many sizes from little sleeping ones, to great, full-blown women with their eyes open and staring at me with a kind of forlorn, hopeless lure in their eyes.

As I looked at them, one of them burst with a loud report like a giant snap-dragon and tiny female spore-forms were scattered in all directions. We were very close, and some of the soft down-floating shapes fell on my upturned face and bare chest. They felt like pussy willow buds striking me. But

in an instant they disappeared, leaving a red spot on my skin. Those tiny wriggling woman-tree spores had wriggled right into me. Instantly strange emotions grew and sprouted within me, and I looked at the lovely, wisely-smiling face of Mena with a new flame consuming me.

"What the devil happened?" I cried, for that tree's spores had me worried.

"Just one of your little creations. The woman—tree! Remember? You dreamed that one up one time when you were drunk. What a week end that was, here. We even had earthquakes that heaved up little cupids with bows and arrows. That woman tree has spread very rapidly. You find the darn thing everywhere now-a-days. It's a regular weed. Some of the natives must plant it about. The wild animals relish the fruit, too. But it has a strange effect on them. A potent drug, isn't it?" Mena was laughing at me. I got the point.

"It has a potent effect, yes. I never knew what I was doing, Mena. That tree is my fault? Don't those women suffer?"

"Well, they aren't exactly happy. All their life they hang around waiting to explode when they're good and ripe. How would you like it?"

"I hope I never get that ripe. I've got a lot to answer for, I guess."

"Your education has just begun." Mena answered meaningfully. But as she spoke, she moved forward, and the slowly drifting cloud of tiny thistle-down woman-forms settled slowly on her skin—and melted into it. A strange glitter came into her eyes almost at once, and she took my hand and pressed it to her breast.

AS SHE led me into the richly scented darkness, her undulant hips and softly polished flanks became

a whispering promise beside me. The yellow moon swung lower, bigger, too low and close to be a moon at all. The darn thing was a living, smiling face. The dark, drifting, flower scented air was a sensuous caress upon our faces, and I could feel the spores of the woman tree growing and spreading a pink mycelium of desire through all my body. Yes, the woman-tree was a strange drug, indeed. I wonder what I was drinking the night I dreamed that one up.

The shadows were sort of sticky, clinging with a tenuous, vague life of their own, and everywhere vibrated a kind of red thinking that was a force given off by the vigorous, so-strange life forms about us. I was thinking deeply, partly because this red, vibrant flow of force was very stimulating to thought. I realized that if I had created these forms of life with my thinking, maybe I still could, maybe my big sleeping self would respond from the prison cot and answer this dream-self's thought—and I could rectify the errors in this woman-tree. If I could just fix it so that they would live instead of exploding into a multitude of tiny spores like that.

I stopped and concentrated upon the problem, and before me a huge sprout sprang from the blood red soil, thrust upward swiftly. Upon the still growing limbs buds appeared. They grew just as rapidly as I could think of the details, and I guess I had had a lot of experience at that, for it was easy. Sleeping women appeared on the boughs, larger and larger—and with a supreme effort, I caused one of the budding young girls to tug her feet free from the green sheath of the bud. She looked about fourteen years old. She tugged free and stepped down from the low growing limb. Her eyes opened—she stared about like a startled young

deer. Behind me the iridescent thought-flow voice of Mena awoke me from the dream of beauty that had become real before me.

"That'll be far enough. You have fixed the tree—and I must say it's better. But you needn't finish the dream. We just haven't time." She took me by the hand again and her voice became a living, red caress from the pulsing inviting life within her. Funny how I could see through things here—and how visible thought was in truth.

"WE ARE looking for my home.

Now just quit changing everything around all the time and maybe I can find it. It should lie not far ahead. It is my own work and the work of my friends—and not your innocuous creation.

"That'll be a relief!" I said, sighing. For some of the things around here I hate to be responsible."

"You don't know the first percent of it. Wait'll some of your monsters start chasing us. You could always think of the darndest things. I never knew what to expect next."

Mena's voice was musing and affectionate, but it gave me the shivers. I was afraid to think of the horrors I had often amused myself with—for I knew if I did, I'd really have horrors here. But a guy can't keep that up forever: not thinking of what he don't want to think of. Sometimes he has to think of it to remind himself what not to think of—and then it would be too darn late.

"You shouldn't grumble at the work of your creator" I was trying to be funny, but the sniff she gave me wasn't very encouraging. She took this place too seriously. But pretty soon I learned to take some things seriously, too.

"We shouldn't leave that poor child wandering around in the woods. She was just born. She'll starve to death."

I was really worried about the pretty kid that had just stepped off the woman-tree.

"You can't expect to raise all the children a woman-tree bears." Mena was plainly exasperated with me. "Why, you'd have my house full of lame brained, pretty morons in a week. You should think about such things more carefully. "Yeah, and all my considering comes to life under my eyes. I'm afraid to think at all, let alone consider. I just stumbled over a consider back there. It spit tobacco juice all over me."

Mena did not answer, but led me swiftly on through the rich scented dark, here in this place that was so much more than any dream. So real it was, more vivid than any life I ever experienced. She, Mena, was looking for her home. I could read her thought, it pulsed from her head, a reddish, brilliant aura of meaning, and I knew that she intended to use my power as the link with the master man of which this world was but the thought field. I was the master man in minute replica—and he did what I thought. She was going to work some strange magic that would make me forever one of this world, instead of condemned to return and drive my big body around the dreary prison routine. I knew she intended to teach me, to give me in some way a strange power and wisdom. But Hell, I was only dreaming—a man can't read thought.

She heard my thought, and I realized more firmly that the living force of thought was the stuff of which this world was made—for her answer pulsed between us like an electric ray; a rich language of pure iridescent force. She answered my doubt in a way that left me grasping at the undeniable truth of her words.

"When a man thinks, he thinks

images of men and objects, trees and hills and houses, all the memory of things as they are around him. Now, few men of your world know the nature of thought, but we here do know the nature of thought. We are the living thought in your brain. Our lives are lived upon the surfaces of your mind's matter. When you think of us, we must do what your will dictates—and our efforts are ruled by your intent, for we are the living thought within your mind. But we have this advantage over you: we know we are but the thought in your mind—while you people of the large world do not know that you were created by the thought in a larger being's mind."

MY thought leaped back at her, a pulsing, startled ray of force struggling with the mighty picture of life within life that she painted for me.

"But if I die, you die. And if the big mind—whose thought we larger people are—dies, would I too perish; and you too, in turn perish? Is one death, then, the death of such an infinite number of people; down and down into the small forever?"

"Not true!" Mena's wise and lovely face flamed back at me, her sharp tongue wetting her vivid lips, "Not true! Because the huge mind of which your upper life was once a part is now dead: that is why you of the upper world do not know that you are his thought images. For he does not exist—his wonder-thought does not any more animate you and tell you all the truths of the other worlds of space. Therefore your life is sterile and empty and dark. Therefore you do not know the truths I speak to you!"

"But, how is it you know these things—if you are only my thought in a dream? I don't know them."

"Because I am more than a native of

your mind. You created me long ago, it is true, but I have been away for many years. I have visited many minds—the wisest I could find, and I have learned many things. But there is an *en rapport* between the beings from a man's mind and himself and I heard your call for me—I came from deep underground where strange work is going on. I came in answer to your call. But since I came back into your mind, you are thinking me. Do you understand?"

"I understand you came in answer to my call. I understand you have some way of releasing me forever from the torture of emptiness that life in a prison is for me. That is all I understand. Telling me of life that is not life, but thought within my own mind—that I am life within a man's mind who is long dead—that is all too much for me. But if it is true, I can understand why men speak of God. For a mind in which our life was but thought would be as God to us."

"You see, sleeper, why I am here. Your size is such that your mind can serve you mightily—and in return for that service I can set you free. Do you understand that?"

"You can set me free, if I will do certain things for you. Yes, I can easily understand that, but not what I could do for you."

"When we reach my home, I will tell you all the things you must think of for me. For whatever you think of, becomes a fact of this life. Think of me as very beautiful."

"Why, I do! You are!"

"Naturally." Her voice was a beauty of living force in the dark; and the more I liked the feel of it, the more lovely it became. I began to understand slightly what she meant. But I didn't need to understand. It worked! Whatever I thought became a fact in this world.

Now I vaguely understood where

Shaky's big friend had gone. Into the world of his own mind. But he had died—after nearly a year of sleep—and she had said that the death of the big mind doomed the worlds within it to sterility; to an existence like the one I had left when I fell asleep. Well, I would explain it to her when I could. Perhaps she had the answer to that, too.

Presently we would find the place she sought. Her home, of course. No wonder she couldn't find it, if every time I thought, the whole world changed around her. I tried to think of her home in front of us. Vaguely something showed in the near dark. A terrific, lurking redness drew us on into the darkness. We walked swiftly. In the long corridors inside my mind that was, I knew, a replica of my larger sleeping mind, many figures went back and forth softly weeping, and the doors were closing one by one. I wondered why they wept. Their faces were turned from me. Beside me the face of a strange woman burned with a beauty that was more than any life of my creation, I knew.

Between us and our nearing destination white images rose, but they were only moonlight—fluid moonlight melting and flowing into the mold of the desire that burned between us. Slowly they melted and flowered again into white-centered red corollas. They came forward one by one, growing and spreading their great petals to embrace us, to blot out all lesser things, and then we would pass into the dark again.

THE moon began to sway in a deadly still dance, that had a passionately overwhelming meaning. The woman beside me swayed too, and danced a passionate dance of red desire; sweetly she twined the thought of woman about my will. And as she danced we went forward still toward the secret, hidden home she sought in the darkness. My-

self also swayed in spite of my will—and the same vibrant dancing of my inner living self danced within me as blood would dance if one's pulse were one's mind.

This inner world was strange, but life here was a thing where the thoughts of desire grew into plant-like life about one even as one created them. And Mena, beside me, smiled secretly as she noted the strange exotic growths spring up about our feet, for she knew that they were my desire of her becoming solid fact within my larger mind.

At last the fearful lure of the place she sought reached toward me in the unpathed dark. The place, her home, loomed up before us. It was big, a fantastic structure of peculiar forms. I realized that Mena had built it by utilizing my unconscious creative force when I was asleep. It was no thought I remembered, but it had a vague familiarity. It was vitally alive, like everything else in this strange world. It was thinking of itself as a home. Sending out a lure of pulsing, living thought-flow that drew us toward it like a wind on our backs. It was colored a pale pink—like tinted marble—and all the mounting beauty of it was like a singing form-poem; a glorified structure built like the head and shoulders of a human. The wings of the house were stretched toward us like the tremendous sculptured arms of the goddess of all homes. It was a flesh-colored marble temple shaped vaguely like the head and shoulders of a god-like human, and it had a sphinx-like smile that said: "I wait for you with mysterious, changing beauty inside me; I wait—to welcome you always home."

I stood a moment in awe before the fantastic welcome of the living home—the place I had not been bright enough to dream up.

But Mena tucked me into its exotic

mystery.

"Come we have much to do."

In the soft blackness where thought itself dwelt forever and blossomed whitely for Mena, the soft and beautiful and somehow formidable woman bent to her work. Beside her the fettered flames of a furnace reached upward like struggling hands.

The work began with a machine she activated, and the face of it lit. It was an oval screen of shining fabric. Upon it pictures formed in response to the visible flow of thought that Mena directed upon its sensitive receiver plate. Peculiar pictures formed within the screen and as they formed before my eyes I realized that as I watched those images my thought was making of a flat image a solid object—somewhere in the vast world of my mind wherein we now worked at her magic. And somehow I understood magic: once it had existed when the master mind of which earth was but an atom had lived and played its mighty forces and solid images about the earth.

The images she caused to form within the screen were, strangely, bits of mechanisms. Long wires of copper, bits of round stuff like coils, nuts, levers, gears, huge dials she showed me on the screen—all unrelated except by the thought in her mind which explained their uses to me. And as I watched her work the image projector, beside us in the darkened house where we stood formed a pile of strange bits of machinery. For hours I stood there, obedient to her will, thinking carefully of each object as she explained what it was and of what it was made—and as I listened one more object grew solidly upon the pile beside her.

THEN I heard her thought desiring some of the machinery that now lay scattered and heaped beside us. I be-

gan to bring her those parts her thought desired. For her work was to set me free and let me trail beside her forever. Her hands moved at the assembling swiftly. Like swift darting snakes among the growing instruments, lightly as moves the whiteness of the cave snake among the fungi's fruiting. From the nearing blackness lifted the haunting cry of a wolf. I thought of him as fleeing and straightaway he was heard farther and farther away. And then my mind slipped a cog at the sorcerous sight of her hands at work, and at her feet suddenly cowered and snapped a cockatrice! I had created the thing with my vile imagining. She screamed and clung to me—and I could not conjure the thing away again. But I did, after her soft embrace had been mine long enough to know I did not want life without her.

It was enough to look at her, and feel the growth of the erotic beauty of life forms all around us that were my desire for her too-great beauty.

Beside her the furnace glowed, lifting its flames like reaching, struggling hands. Into its heat now again she plunged the parts as she took them up, reshaping them where my clumsy thought had failed to follow closely the projection she had shown me.

Mena's brilliantly colored thought flow began again—directed toward me.

"To bring you here permanently would be to cause your death in the prison cell. For with you would come the volition of the huger body. I am building a volitional robot—a kind of thinking machine—which will be built to take your place as the ego of the brain. We will be in constant telepathic-radio-contact with this robot and can direct the activity of the huge body in the prison without anyone being the wiser. If we should lose contact through some mishap to the apparatus—this

robot will be able to carry on and make your body perform the simple acts of eating, responding to commands; all the ordinary acts of your life are built into the robot brain with records of your thought." She paused and looked speculatively at me. "I know a great deal about you, you know."

"I have gathered that you do." I responded somewhat disconsolately. It was not a little embarrassing to have a woman who had been raised in your own brain. She probably knew how often I changed my socks.

"And how seldom you take a bath," she amended my thought.

Then she went on to the main business of the moment.

"We need the strong life force of that huger you to support this world. This robot is my answer to your problem. It is not perfect, but we can build a better one later. This one is only a pile of records and an intricate voice response set of relays. On hearing certain words, he refers to the action records and thinks the record—just a simple radio broadcast on thought wavelength. No one will notice the difference as your body will respond to the robot just as it does to you. If they do notice, the chances are we will also notice the mishap and correct the trouble by taking control. See, pull this lever and you are in full contact with your mind above. Push the lever—the robot takes control, you are free. . . .

I HAD been fearing to think for fear I would conjure up some monstrosity from my mind that I could not handle. I did not realize that everything I had ever thought still lived somewhere in my mind. Something I could not at first explain happened. The thick black swirling dark outside began to stiffen into a horrible visibility. A dread life was coming, coming, from some far den

of incomprehensible nature. It was something I had read of long ago in Merritt's *Dwellers In The Mirage*. As the chill of the Kraken Khalkru struck through the room, my mind failed me in stark fear. I had not been thinking of the thing at all. Perhaps my larger mind above was doing some dreaming on its own—or the Kraken, released by my mind from some unconscious control, had stirred itself out of its memory bonds and was looking for food. Whatever the cause, the thick coils of living, utterly cold darkness that were the tentacles of Khalkru slid slowly into the room from the outer dark. Maybe that thing was only thought in my mind, but it certainly seemed to have plenty of life of its own. My mind refused any possible idea of an out—refused to think at all—just froze in a horror at the dread death reaching for us. In a moment we would dissolve into the Kraken's grasp.

I knew there was some answer, some talisman I had only to think of to possess. But what was it? What had that mighty hero of Merritt's glorious story used to hold the Kraken in check? As I pondered desperately, racking my brain for the answer to the freezing dread of Khalkru, the long teptacle of utter cold slid into the firelight and touched—my woman, Mena.

My heart suddenly knew it was hers when I saw her begin to dissolve into the sucking force that was the Kraken. My wise witch woman of the flying white hands and mysterious wisdom was to become a nothing from the thing that was also my creation and Merritt's. Ignorance of what we did had made Merritt and I kill something worth a thousand of us.

Upon her form that was so much more of beauty than a mere woman's right to wear; upon that overpowering man-lure of form that she had con-

structed for herself from my crude beginnings of creation; that she had made from the crude stuff of the thought which was the base material of this world; now, out of the utter dark fell the tentacle that was the reaching Kraken, living in my mind where Merritt had put him long ago. Upon her swift darting beauty that was almost swift enough to escape the utter doom that my mind was unable to deny it fell. My mind knew that evil has no rules, and the Kraken was evil. I knew the Kraken must live if anything in this world was alive—and I could not think it away!

The weighting swirls of inexplicably summoned evil darkness came writhingly about her darting form, and from her red and lovely inner being the flow of warning, beseeching meaning ceased. Each coil of that fearful, other-dimensioned life-force pressed ever more solidly into being out of the dread, living darkness. The weight of the gathering coils upon her dragged her now stiffening beauty to the floor. Swiftly that sucking life stripped the life away from her to leave a shrinking nothingness that slowly drew upon itself still further doom by moving, reaching for the life that was refused. I had seen many things die, but never did I see so much strong being within the flesh I had fashioned and she had so improved.

NOW that the coils were reaching for me, my frozen mind leaped suddenly to the answer:

"The ring—the ring of the Kraken Khalkru must be upon my finger. I held my hand toward the thing and upon my finger gleamed the great transparent amber within which writhed the tiny replica of the Kraken. The cold lessened, and slowly the mighty thing withdrew—out of sight, but not out of mind.

I dragged myself toward that which had been the woman I desired more than any other I had ever seen. She lay blooming still upon the floor—but not white and too lovely any more. She was like black violets upon a velvet breast of blood-red would-be life, faintly quivering and telling of a death that was so much more than death to her, for she could not die. But she had been hurt so terribly that now, forever she must lie and bloom as the black and painfully living memory of an ever-living death.

I stooped and closed my eyes and thought of her as she had been when we came to that beautiful home of hers so short a time before. Her white hips quivered in that vibrant dance; her beautiful form undulated softly before me; those red lips opened and the sharp pointed tongue came out between the glittering teeth; I felt the sharp ecstasy of her kiss upon my lips, the embrace that was so much more than any embrace of mortal woman could be. Then I opened my eyes and closed them swiftly again. For before me bloomed a half-life, rooted to the blood-red stains upon the floor; a quivering pleading half-life that was beauty not yet fully born! The meaning of her mind—her mind that was more than my own—flowed pulsing between my closed eyes and her own pleading, flashing eyes that were not wholly there. The meaning from her mind flowed into mine and somewhere my sleeping mind became more fully aware of my desire and when I opened my eyes again she stood before me once more clothed in all the beauty that only her mind, reading mine and changing fluidly to meet my desire, could give a man. For she was thought, but not wholly my own thought.

"Now let us have no more accidents," she cautioned me; as though,

since I could not help it, there was no blame to be attached.

She bent over the mighty instrument she was fashioning from the piled stuff of my thought's creation. She was all right. My heart eased up, and an awful pressure lifted from my back. She was all right. Life was living again in the form that had so swiftly assumed the major job of illumining my darkness.

"TO BRING you here," Mena explained again, "would be to cause your death, for with you would come the inner volition of the great being you really are. So, as I told you, I am building a volitional robot to take your place. It is a simple kind of thinking machine: if it were very complicated I would not know how to do it. But building machines with this material is a different thing than building them with the inanimate matter of your world. These parts have a will of their own, a will to do what they are made for—and they are self healing if broken, too. This box will take your place in the ego center of your brain. It is just a pile of records of your daily actions which I have taken in the past to protect myself. Sometimes you visualize the boots of the men on the way to the dining hall and we get trampled. So I know your schedule pretty well. These records are hooked up to a set of voice response relays that ought to cover most of your daily intercourse with your fellows. I have hooked up a little alarm for trouble, and if anything goes wrong, the alarm will summon us."

She finished the robot, and started in on the rest of the pile of parts I had created. What was it? It was long, ovoid, a sort of fuselage. Now and again I had to help her lift the larger sections of the shell into place. After hours of this work we had a something

that I began to realize was a ship—an airship or something like it. Right then I began to worry, because all the time I had been helping her create the parts of that ship I had not known it was a plane. How could it exist if my sleeping self didn't know it? Well, it did.

A beautiful little two-seater job, it was. At the last she began to load cans and boxes of food supplies into it.

"Just where does this ship come into the picture anyway?" I asked Mena. "I thought you were only building a robot."

"The robot is that big box over there. This is both a ship and a creator of a sustaining force to keep our bodies alive between what you call worlds. But that is not all. There is more to do. Put the robot aboard."

It was a job to lift that robot. I had carried a trunk or two, but hefting that thing was a job would have broken down the best porter in the Ben Franklin Hotel. But I finally got the thing into the cabin of the ship. I sat down, mopping my quivering face. Mena laughed at me. She was always finding me amusing.

"You're a bit disrespectful to your creator," I put in weakly, but I felt strangely like a husband in one of those plays where the wife is dominant. She knew what came next all the time—I just went along.

"If I treated you as I feel about you, you'd soon become unbearably stuck on yourself." Mena dimpled at me, her pointed tongue darting between her tiny glittering teeth. "You shouldn't kick anyway. You made me just the way you wanted me."

I sighed. I was hooked. She was more what I wanted in a woman than any other. Her character was my fault, all right. I must have a hidden desire to be dominated by a woman. Yet her character seemed her own—I would

hardly want her if she was just a reflection, an obedient projection of my will. Or was she? I enjoyed every word; every motion of her body; every pulse of her thought. Perhaps she was a perfection of obedience to my unconscious will. Well, I would never know that. I gave up.

"What comes next?" I asked her. I always would.

"We take the robot to the ego center. We leave there after fastening it firmly to your nerve ends. Then we are free."

"I wish Shaky was here," I said, but she apparently didn't hear me.

THE ship lifted gently, then shot faster up into the dark. I had the great box of the ego-robot in front of me. It tried to slide through the wall, but only pinned me against it.

Within minutes we settled down near the glittering curtains that surrounded the place she called ego center. Ego center was a depression—quite large—perhaps several hundred yards in relation to our size. It was surrounded by growths of living matter which formed the glittering curtains through which I had first seen Mena. They were a glistening white stuff that Mena told me were nerve ends. They looked like coral trees—quite thin and tall. But they were soft and of an elastic nature. I staggered through them with the robot and Mena showed me where it went. A multitude of cables led from it, and these Mena attached to the great nerves that laced through the depression like cables in a phone-central building. She did it by screwing the corkscrew-like ends of the wires into the living nerve cables. How she knew where they went or which were which I couldn't figure, but she did. It hurt like hell as she screwed the cable ends into the nerves—then the pain stopped. The robot had taken over. I was free!

Mena handed me a little box with a lever and a row of buttons on it.

"This is the remote control for the robot. When you want to know what your body is doing, press the lever. When you want to direct your own body for some reason—press the knobs. The red one is for talking, the blue one for walking. The black one puts you to sleep."

As we went back to the ship a doubt struck me. The whole physico-chemical electrical mechanism of the body and mind was a pretty complicated machine for a robot to run—this could only be an experimental effort on Mena's part. I wondered if she realized the immense complexity of the forces which created the things on this brain-surface world. Suppose that robot's parts had retained some will different from my own that would work out into a kind of robot imagination. Suppose it got ideas, and the ideas became things around us. I communicated my fears to Mena, but she laughed scoffingly.

"All you have to do is pull the lever. Quit thinking about it. It won't happen now if you don't think about it. I should say that if the robot did start making things he would be a big improvement. Woman-trees, and cupids spouting out of the ground. Krakens and snake-women crawling all over the place, just to mention a few. I wouldn't worry if I were you. Any change will be an improvement." Mena's thought flow was scornful, but somehow indulgently affectionate anyway.

Mena pointed to the sky, so dark and sentient with the forces of life in it—and I realized from the images of her streaming thought that out there were worlds on worlds without end. And far enough away, those worlds were not in the prism, but in another, healthier life.

"But, if we go out into all that mystery, can you pick the world we go to?

A body that is young and healthy and outside the prison? That prison must cover many light years of this small space down here." I was beginning to learn to think in the terms of this other world, beginning to understand the changed conditions of this world from the greater one I was so weary of.

"We are going to a world I know well—in a mind I know well. He is a very young man—and he is always dreaming. Dreams that make of the worlds in his mind paradises beyond our limited imaginations. There one is never wearied by reality—for reality is an intense and stimulating dream of ever-changing aspects of beauty. He is a painter—and the thoughts of his mind contain a solidity, a symmetry and shapeliness such as no lesser mind ever achieves. There will be happiness for us."

"It sounds good. I wish Shaky could see it."

"And who is Shaky?" she asked.

I told her about Shaky, and how he started my search for a way into this world.

She said "Why not? Get in and we will go and get him."

I ENTERED the little ship gingerly.

I could not get used to the idea that thought could be solid—and I knew this ship was made purely from my own thought-energy. But she was a solid, tight little job, and in the rear the power unit purred with a strength that nothing but metal could have put out. Well, I figured foggily, if there was iron in the blood, there ought to be iron in the thought cells.

"What makes her go?" I asked my Mena as she lifted the ship up into the thick dark.

She smiled at me. "It's about time you learned. We're going to be in the ship a long time. It travels by a kind

of magnetic flow repulsion—as near as I can explain it to you. A set of whirling coils in the bow are charged with magnetic from the dynamo in the rear. They form a magnetic vortice—a sucking whirlpool of force, and the magnetic vacuum thus formed sucks into the funnel of force a flow of the strong magnetic which fill these worlds with both the life-force that charges your cells, and the force we call animal magnetism. The whirling coils suck these force ions down and down into a tight little force flow which is finally expelled from the rear much as a jet plane expels compressed air and gas from the jet tubes. A byproduct of the mechanism is the vital force you notice filling the ship. Stimulating, isn't it?"

"Quite," I answered, my head buzzing. It sounded too, too simple the way she explained it. And we built it in hours! I would just have to get used to her. After all, she was just a figment of my imagination.

She let out a peal of laughter at my bemused thought.

"So I am just a figment of your imagination, am I? Does it feel like that when you kiss me, eh?"

"No, you are real enough. But I just can't get used to things. I don't really understand this world."

"You see, things here are in some ways the same as things in your own world—but they act very differently! All the matter and force in this world is responsive in different ways to the mighty force flows of your greater body's energy. That is the only difference. Later you will understand why it is important."

The ship was flashing up and ever up at greater and greater speed. A needle on the instrument board marched steadily across the face of the dial and I realized it was a kind of speedometer. The world I had stepped

into when I parted the curtain of sleep and met her was far behind.

For a time we drove on in silence, then Mena began to muse aloud, "Your life seems so strange, so empty to me. Surely there is more of love, and beauty and grace and dancing—more joy of living, more laughing and singing, more health and force to your life than you realize."

I answered, "You are wrong. Compared to the utter beauty of this life in your world of the living brain of a man—ours is a sterile emptiness, a dragging of unwilling feet toward an unwanted grave. When the children grow strong, for awhile they have the strength and grace, the force of life to be happy; but swiftly this vanishes and they become dull plodding repetitious beings of little creation. Age has begun to take their life force away and what is left them is just sufficient for their daily routine of work and eat and sleep and rise again to the same routine. They do not feel much like dancing or singing—they have not the energy. Joy is more or less vicarious, watching younger, abler people dance or sing, watching pictures of imaginary lives of a fuller and healthier nature than it can be in truth. It is all a kind of bluff at living; it is not healthy vital life as is your life."

MENA mused about the life of the bigger world and said, "You think this life is beautiful; you should meet our immortals, those who used to live here, but migrated recently to a younger brain. It was from them I learned my wisdom, my knowledge of science and how to construct such ships and motors as you have seen. They live a life of such utter pleasure there is no way to tell you. But they have such an easy life that I wonder if it would not be better for them to have an oppo-

sition—something they would have to struggle with to make them tough and to give them sympathy for pain and trouble. They are sure it is only due to stupidity and naturally mean will—and I am sure they are wrong there. They think that anyone could live as well as themselves if they tried, not realizing the ages of development that have passed to give them their knowledge of life. They could do a lot for the big men if they tried to, but they prefer to flit from man to man to find the youngest and most beautiful worlds to live in—when they could teach and cultivate the natural abilities of the working natives, to make the whole human race healthier and abler; but they prefer to spend their time in pleasure. One can almost hate them for that, but not quite; they have such charming ways and such able mental defense for their lazy ways."

"They are the upper crust of the worlds of the mind, are they?" I asked Mena.

"Eventually we will run into some of them and then you will see what they are—there is no way to tell you about them. If you could get some of them to help you—"

"Could you get a few of them Mena. Why would they refuse?"

"They wouldn't refuse once you got them interested. But they seldom do anything because none of them are interested in anything that means work. They need your drive, and you need their wisdom. Eventually I hope to get you together."

"Where are we going now?" I asked Mena. "Do we ever go back to my body's whereabouts?"

"I will answer yes to the last question. As to the first, we are going to get your pal Shaky. It would be hardly just to leave him after he pointed the way of escape to you."

"What time is it?" I asked Mena. She looked at the clock ticking on the instrument board. "About eleven. Why?"

"Shaky will be asleep by now. He has to be asleep, doesn't he? It has to happen sort of in the same way it happened with me?"

"Yes, he has to be asleep, and he has to be dreaming. Dreaming is a state where the mind takes a body to itself in the thought world of the mind and wanders in that tiny body, noting its travel in the memory scrolls of the whole big mind. In that state the small body can step out of the big mind. But with the little body goes all ego, all consciousness of self. The big one has no self. If the little ego steps out of the body and stays away, he can't wake up."

"That explains these Hindu trance tricks and mind reading and such stunts—to me. The fellow just learned the trick of stepping out of his mind and wandering around."

"I would seem so. But few of them ever learn the trick of traveling far distances as we are doing."

THERE were no stars in the space around us. Far, far overhead glowed a receding row of great glowing bodies in space. Watching them I noticed a tiny twist of ultra brightness near the centers of the great glowing clouds. Suddenly I realized what they were. They were the lights of the prison air shaft between the long tiers of cells. We were not in space. We were traveling between two cells in the prison. As I marveled at the magnitude of the prison which had not seemed big, but was now as big to me as infinite space, Mena set the ship into a great downward spiral. We passed through great bars of shadow and I knew we had passed between the bars of Shaky's cell. Ten

minutes later Mena set the ship down upon a world much like the one we had left. Shaky had a very charming mind, I realized, noting the neat homes and rows of fields, the great buildings like nothing on earth but rows of colleges. I realized these were Shaky's young dreams of going to college, whole rows of them, and all peopled with students. Shaky's mental world had not the sensuous appeal of my own, I realized—but was perhaps more practical on the whole.

It did not take Mena long to find Shaky. He was seated on the lawn in a ring of students who were listening with immense attention and respect to some discourse he was giving. We did not wait to listen, but seized his hands, one in each of our own. Shaky was dragged, protesting, into our tiny ship, and we were spiraling upward before he got a word out.

"Jack, what the 'ell goes on? I don't understand this. Where the 'ell you taking me? I'm giving my friends some much needed information back there. You can't do this."

"Remember me, Shaky?" I asked.

"Why sure, you're the guy that's still sleeping in the hospital ward. You didn't wake up yesterday morning. Nobody understands it but me. I told him to get away. Heh. Heh—I told him, and he worked it, he did. A smart fellow, and a good one, too. I knew he could do it. I seen it done before. Yes-sir." Shaky settled back with a sigh, then suddenly straightened again. "But you're him. What are you doing here? I thought you got away. And what are you doing with me? Tell me what . . ." Shaky's voice trailed off in profound puzzlement.

"Don't you get it, Shaky. I came back for you."

"You came back for me! I gotta think. You came back for me. I won't

wake up tomorrow in that old prison, eh I'll be with you, out on some world where the black lily grows ten feet high, and the women sleep in them like babies in hammocks—with nothing on at all? I'll be with you, the whole universe to roam in, always something new to see and do, and no death anywhere—the world of sleep? You came and got me . . . ?" Shaky's voice was a stream of wonder between us, his face a glory of glad thankfulness.

"That's right, Shaky. You showed me the way. I came back for my pal. Savvy."

"Yeh, I savvy. It means you are the kind of guy I thought you were, instead of a rotter. That's easy to figure. Most guys forget so easy. I'm glad you came back. I been in there a long long time. Marching to breakfast; marching back to the cell; marching out to the yard; marching to work; don't step out of line; don't talk; twenty years I put in and no sign of parole. I wouldn't of lasted much longer Jack."

"I knew you were just about worn out with all the waiting, Shaky. I couldn't have enjoyed myself here, thinking of you back there. Besides I've got a job planned for us that I'll need your help on."

"You ain't talking about work! Do you have to work here, Butch?"

"Nothing like that, Shaky. I been thinking of the big-shots that get the dough from our extended sentences, from the nuthouses where they put us when our sentence is about up and we might get away from them. I been figuring about those guys for years, dreaming of the day I could get back at them. Now I got a chance to do plenty to them."

"What do you mean? A chance to get even with the big shots that cheat us out of our lives for the lousy dollar and a half a day they get from the state

for us?"

"It ain't always a dollar and a half, Shaky. The veteran's hospitals get as high as five and six dollars for tubercular patients. But those racketeers don't cure them, they just keep 'em nice and sick so they won't go away and lose the boss all that nice board money. So I got a plan."

"What's your plan? I got some ideas myself all at once."

"WELL, here it is. First we build a nice prison here on the world in my brain for 'em. Then we go on a trip into space, land in their brain while they're asleep, take 'em into our ship in a dream—and lock 'em up in the prison forever and ever amen! There they gotta stay—and people don't die here; not until the big man in the macro dies. Time goes a lot further here. The bodies of the big shots will die up in their nice soft beds, sleeping to death. Down here we give 'em the same deal they gave us, only it will last!—maybe forever if we keep moving on. They won't like it, Shaky. They won't enjoy it. Not with the woman trees I'll plant outside the windows for 'em to want and never be able to reach."

"Oboy, oboy—Butch I always knew there was something more to you than an ordinary sucker. You're a right guy. My, will this be heaven! And when I don't feel good or get tired of life the way it ought to be, I'll just walk over to our private prison and peek into the cells and laugh at the big shots that stole my life away—and laugh and laugh. Then I'll feel better for a long time."

"It'll be good medicine, all right, Shaky. And now, to work. We gotta do this just right. No slips, no prison breaks—they ain't to get a chance." I raised my voice. "Mena, oh Mena. I would always be calling 'Oh, Mena,'

when I really needed anything in this world. "Mena, look here. We got to postpone that trip to that paradise in that guy's head you were telling me about. I got a little job to do first."

SHAKY held out his hands. "Look, Butch, my hands don't shake down here. Jeess, is that a relief. If I only had a cigarette."

"Maybe I can get you one." I hadn't tried Mena's remote control for the robot. It was about time I tried it out. I pushed the lever. Now I was in control of the body. I hoped it wasn't falling down the stairs. I knew it would be asleep. From the little box came a voice not my own.

"Cripes, Butch—it's a hell of a place to fall asleep, in the middle of the hall. Get up before the guards see you." I pushed the lever, and the walking knob. Then I pulled the lever and pushed the talk button.

"Am I all right now?" I said into the box. A voice replied, "Yeh, you're walkin—but where are you walking? Come along to the mess hall and quit dreaming."

"Look, Fred, I ain't exactly myself. Will you kinda look out for me for a while, I don't want any of them Docs putting me under observation. You know what that means."

"Yeah, it means they put you in the bug house and you never get out no matter how long you stay. I'll look out for you, Butch."

"Thanks, Fred," Watching in the tiny screen on the box, I saw myself enter the mess hall and sit down. Then I pushed the button and thought of a sack of tobacco. It plunked down beside me almost at once, about twice as big as it should be. Thought worked that way unless you were careful. I took the tobacco and rolled Shaky a smoke. Then I put it in my own mouth

and lit it. Shaky was rolling his own. His hands were okay now.

"I never saw a Bull Durham sack that big."

"You never saw Bull Durham float through the air either. As long as we're on this world, I can do things like that. That's why I mean we got a way to get even with those rats that steal the dough that's supposed to be used to keep life liveable for us prisoners."

"I'd feel a lot better, Butch, if I had a tommy-gun, or some kind of gat. This is a screwy world, you know. If all them crime stories you used to read are living people around here. We oughta be prepared."

"It's got me plenty worried, too, Shaky. Some of the things I used to think about ain't funny when you realize they're living things right around us somewhere. We got a lot to learn." As I talked, I visualized a couple of automatics and we tucked them in our belts. I kept on with the armament program till we had a nice little arsenal, several types of machine guns, a couple of real high-powered elephant guns for reappearances of things like the Krak-en-Khalkru, and a box of hand grenades, just in case.

I was beginning to see big possibilities in this life. I could bring in the rest of our buddies in the prison, and we would have a real outfit to crack down on the rats who bleed the government by keeping us in those morgues they called prisons. Shaky had several guys in mind to help too. It began to look interesting.

"We'll build a big palace, and fit it up with girls from the woman-trees for servants—and the guys we get out of stir will be our army. We'll run things. And we'll keep an eye on things in the prisons, and when we see somebody doing the boys dirt, why we'll just give 'em a nice dream about a

prison they can't get out of, either. We oughta have a nice collection of rats in short order."

If only I could have foreseen the trouble our idea could bring us, here where things could be perfect if I was smart enough not to make too many mistakes.

I WENT to work on Mena, explaining our plans and she got real enthusiastic when she realized what we could do. We spent the whole morning making two more ships like the first one. I kept her talking and explaining so that I would understand the construction of the ships. Where had she learned the science behind such work? She explained that there were small groups of immortals—people who understood that immortality was a matter of migrating from young mind to young mind—and she had lived for some years with one of these groups. But they had left this world, and she had not wanted to leave her home. I knew why, for I had made her. She just couldn't leave me. But why hadn't she brought me from sleep? She explained that she had tried, but had never been able to catch me in a 'walking' dream—I was immovable in my big strong will's ignorance of what was needed. Then Shaky had given me the idea—and there had been nothing to it.

"Well, as soon as we're through settling with that bunch upstairs, we will look up some of those immortals and go back to school."

"That would be wise," agreed Mena.

That night Shaky and I and Mena visited the heads of two of my buddies in the prison. There wasn't much room, but we got them in the ship. The next few days were spent in intensive education by Mena of these two fellows—and in installing robots in their ego-

centers so that they would always have their bodies in case they wanted to return. Not that there was much chance of that—but we just didn't have the heart to kill the beautiful worlds that minds are, when we could keep them alive. There was no telling what beautiful and intelligent creatures were living in their minds.

I had an idea that would save the trouble of building a big building in which to keep our captives. Mena told me it would work—so I went ahead with it. The next night, Shaky took a ship and my buddy Fred, an ex-rum-runner who looked more like Babe Ruth than Babe Ruth, and I, took another ship and the other new recruit—a fellow with whom I had often played poker. I admired his intelligence. It had always cost me plenty, so I knew it was there. He was a southerner, and his long lanky form stopped somewhere between six and seven feet. His name was Hank McAfee. He had black hair and eyes, and a kind of sharp humorous way about him like Will Rogers. I suppose it was the Indian in him that reminded me of Will Rogers.

We both set out to get the guy we thought knew most about the racket behind the prison. I went after the warden and Shaky went after the rat that kept the books. One of 'em ought to know the answer as to who got the dough that kept us in jail. Mena stayed at home, though she didn't like the idea. I figured she might as well start getting used to it, for the job could get dangerous. It did.

I didn't have any trouble at first, though finding the warden in his big house was a job in navigation. It was nearly morning when I got there. I set the ship down near the waving, glittering curtain of nerve ends that surrounded the ego center. Here I learned a thing very strange: the ego of a man is

not always human, but is a shape which corresponds to his character. Wallowing in the center of the ego area, in a great pool of red fluid, was a monster; not a man at all. Hank McAfee took one look and vomited.

The green back of the thing rose; the little ripples of red fluid fell flashing in the strange sunlight, rippling into flying drops of red spray. Before I could stop him, Hank lobbed a grenade at the wallowing monster. It fell at the edge of the pool and exploded. A great blast, a hell of lot bigger than a normal grenade knocked Hank and I to the ground. A big wound, the size of a sand quarry, began pouring out blood as though Hank had struck oil.

ALL the far expanse of red growth quivered and shrieked faintly at the death that was swiftly spreading from the great wound. At first far-off, the death rushed closer like a poisonous gas in the vitalizing force that keeps the world of thought alive. Hank and I retreated into our Mena-ship, starting the motors idling, for we need a similar force to keep our life in the small—and Mena had built such a force machine into the plane.

The living plants or plant animals began a faint but shrill shrieking that would not stop or let the nerves stop shrinking from the sound, the smell, the awful knowledge of full and complete death of every living thing. The very soil—red, fleshy—was now dying, turning a sick gray.

Such was death when it came from the big brain down to the small life that was now ours. Relatively it must have been a small wound that Hank had inflicted upon the warden's mind; but he must have severed the nerves controlling the heart or some other vital nerve. The ego center is a mass of big nerve cables branching out into the

brain.

It was a fearful, unbearable thing to watch; yet it must be and we must deal it out where it was most needed. No matter that many of these little lives were intrinsically of an infinitely greater life value than the large life of which they were a part, it had to be done—these criminals had to be killed because of the death they dealt. It was a *living* death for any man they could grasp.

As the rest of the mind died, the great strength of the warden's ego-life kept him struggling. He came loping across the flooding red soil. He was not human at all, but a monster. A kind of man-like dinosaur with a human face. The idealization of his blood lust in his mind, was him, his ego—a monster. As he came toward us, the decreasing life force of his mind made his size shrink—and shrink. Those dreams of his of racing through endless jungles and killing everything that lived, would now end. No more would he raven through his own mind, killing his own mind's people. The big stupe had sense enough to be anything in a dream where he could be anything—and his ego took the shape of a man-like dinosaur.

The horror parted the ragged, torn curtain of nerve trees and looked back at the destruction. The nerve cables were blasted apart and the blood welled steadily out in a great gushing flow. The red tide rose and spilled out through the nerve trees in a flood. All around, the thought growths of the mind were wilting down to nothing. The place was turning into a desert as rapidly as the wind of death could blow across it.

I set the ship down beside the thing that had been our warden and beckoned to him. The horror responded obediently, as though he thought he was

welcome.

"Nice of you, Butch, to help me out. It looks like we're having a flood."

"Yeh," I answered, not wanting to spill the beans prematurely.

"I was getting pretty weak," he went on sociably and gratefully. "But I feel fine now that you picked me up. What the Devil could have happened?"

"Nothing happened, brother, I just woke up and you didn't. That's all. You'll learn all about it soon enough." I couldn't wait to get him back in my own brain and start the third degree I had planned. I hadn't forgot the grilling I got over an escape attempt. They put me in bed for two months.

I set the ship down outside Mena's home and brought the Warden into the place where Mena waited with the remote control. I took the box and pulled the lever giving me control of the brain force. Then I stared and stared at the Warden, thinking just what he ought to look like, and as I stared he gradually changed. The fear inspiring dinosaur shape dwindled, the green, scaly skin grew soft and his little eyes popped out into staring globes, his legs shrank into two frog jumpers, his arms into two little patty-whackers.

The Warden now wore a shape more suitable—he was a toad. Just to make sure he wouldn't get into trouble here, I imagined the fingers off his hands.

I FLUNG a thought at him then. "If you want to get out of that shape, you had better give with the info on the racket."

"What racket?" asked the Warden.

"So you haven't had enough? Well, we'll really turn on the heat." I pulled the lever on the box again. I imagined him rooting to the ground—that would keep him out of trouble.

He was a mess to be cluttering the rather attractive fauna of my landscape but I couldn't help that.

"How do you feel now?" I asked him.

"What do you want, Butch Taylor? I haven't anything of yours."

"You've got ten years of my life and you can't give it back. But you're gonna give back some other young fellow's lives that I know of. Who gets the dough? Who's back of the racket? Give with the info, or I'll start thinking up unpleasant things like ten-foot caterpillars to chew on that toad-tree you look like now."

"I can't tell you; they'd kill me." He was really worried.

"You're dead now, but you don't know it. I killed your body back there when I picked you up. You're completely under control—so give with the info. You got nothing to lose and plenty to gain."

I was still working with him when Shaky and Fred spiraled down out of the red dark.

They let out a howl to see the Warden all done up like a tree-toad or a toad-tree, whichever he could be called.

Shaky walked up to the Warden, who was puffing out his cheeks and croaking in an effort to pull his rooted feet free from the soil. Shaky pulled his big red nose, which had survived the transformation I had put him through.

"Fancy meeting you here, you big crook!" Shaky shouted at him, laughing fit to die. "And all dressed up, too. What are you going to do about it?"

Big Fred had his say, too.

"You big four-flusher, you pushed us around for a lot of years. Now it's our turn." Fred hauled off and cracked him across the face. I was afraid he might break his head off, for I didn't know just how sturdy his body might be here on an alien mind surface. But he survived the heavy blow.

"That's for the time you grilled me and Butch for trying to get out of your filthy boarding house. You've earned your last crooked dollar, if I'm any judge. There are a few more like you are going to get their's before we're through. Your outfit has spread its tentacles into prisons and hospitals—places that were built to rehabilitate criminals and the insane and make useful citizens out of them. You turned those places into hells, places where men are deliberately driven nuts to keep the population of your maniac boarding houses at a paying high. Guys never get out of those holes. Who gets the dough?"

"I don't know who the big shot is. He used to be a German agent by the name of Klug. But since Germany fell, he may be dead. And he may be right at home in New York under another name collecting his dough from all the agents who kept us paying off. We don't get a lot of that dough. We do the dirty work to keep our jobs. You can't keep a job in many hospitals or prisons unless you play the racket's game. So we took orders and kept our jobs. We tried to make it as easy as we could, but you can't feed men a lot when the racket doesn't leave you the money."

"Fred, take it down. Get the names of the men he does know. Don't kill him, not right away anyway. We want to be sure we got everything he knows. And don't believe any soft soap. He's just as poisonous as the rest of 'em. You know that. We're going to work on the bookkeeper."

TWO weeks later we had a nice orchard of rooted racketeers beside Warden Dowes. They stood and waved their handleless limbs in futile rage at us. We had plenty of dope on the racket, but distance was getting us down. We

had everybody that got a cent out of this prison that could be reached. But to go outside of the prison after the bigger shots of the racket was a journey to contemplate in our size. Then Shaky had an idea.

"Suppose we do our traveling in other bodies. We can take over the body of a copper, drive over to New York, walk in on the hide-out of the big shot—and crack down on that nest of leeches who get fat on the easy life of keeping Young America crazy and in jail. All the docs have to do is say a man's crazy and he's sunk—and they ain't gonna say nothing else when their outfit gets up to six bucks a day for their keep. Funny a few legislators couldn't figure out that the more they pay for a guy's keep in an institution the harder it would be for him to get out."

This thing was sure inviting a lot of work, when all I wanted to do was breeze around with Mena in the ship she built and enjoy this life-of-Reilly forever. There wasn't anything to work for really—the very air kept a man alive. Eating was just done for pleasure. There were all kinds of fruit trees, and not all of them bore women, like my woman-tree. All the seed catalogues I had looked at every spring with my mouth watering had taken root and were bearing all over the place. You should have seen those dream watermelons—six feet long. It came from reading Moule's seed book before going to bed.

But it couldn't be done. I couldn't walk off this job. I had a fight that evil thing that robbed so many, so very many young Americans of their life the most shameful way. My people dropped me like a hot potato when I got framed into jail. Naturally, they couldn't know there was no more criminal racket than some state prison ad-

ministrations. And no crazier men, practically speaking, than the men who ran insane asylums and thought they could get away with making people crazy for the board money they got paid. I couldn't walk out on that job.

But I needed a real outfit. Who knows what we would run into bucking an outfit as big as this? And they had so many guys covering up for them that nobody really got wise. So the four of us, four ex-cons and Mena, sat that night around a table in Mena's drawing room, and planned our campaign.

As usual, Mena laid down the law, to begin with.

"You fellows think you can accomplish this job, but you are going up against some things you don't understand. Not all of the men who profit from these institutions' graft are ignorant of the mind and its properties in sleep. You may run into trouble, big trouble. I would advise intensive training, and an enlarging of your force to several hundred. You must perfect the technique of taking over a body in the macro—so that there is no hitch. You have laid out a job for yourselves, the magnitude of which you may not know. When you get into some of those minds, they will be warned, and you know what power the big mind can use against you if he is forewarned before you take over the ego-center."

"We are willing to learn, we are willing to work—and we can't walk out on the job. Think of all the vets that went through hell coming home to support grafters. We gotta do it."

Shaky was looking much younger, and his sincere conviction of the necessity for this job was inspiring. I had little doubt we could do it.

I figured we would get about two hundred of the best of the cons, out of the prison—guys who had been gyped

by the racket one way or another—and men we knew we could trust not to go bad on us. Somehow the prison managed to keep a lot of really fine men behind the bars. You see, once you gyp a real man, you've either got to kill him or keep him locked up; or he'll get even, come Hell or high water. So they kept these guys locked up, and killed 'em when they tried too hard to arouse interest. Killing a guy in prison is easy. Four or five guards just enter a cell after lock-up, and kick the poor guy to death. Then they write up the report—attempted escape or resisted restraint—it didn't matter.

WELL, Shaky and I went steadily on, getting three and four men a night into our bunch at Mena's house. She began to enjoy the excitement and taught them everything she could, which was plenty.

After they knew how to proceed, Mena returned most of these men to their own heads—and installed robots in place of their conscious selves in the ego-centers. She gave the men a remote control box like my own, and started each one in manufacturing parts with the mind's force of thought.

In a month we had over two hundred trained men and about a hundred and fifty ships. We began to see the possibilities of a real organization down here. We began to learn plenty about the dangers of the life, too. Every time we ventured into a new head, we met a new brand of monsters, and some of them were too tough to reason with, not with ordinary guns.

Up to the time we took over the ego center of an opposition brain, we were in terrible danger. If he happened to get wise to what we were up to, he could destroy us all just by wishing us dead. The tremendous force of thought from the whole brain would kill us just by

willing so. But our safety lay in their unawareness of our existence, intent or methods. One slip could cost us all the edge which this gave us.

All the time we plotted and planned and kept notes on the details of the prison graft organization, Mena was wanting to go to a certain head she knew of where we could lead a life of great pleasure due to the peculiarly lush nature of the growth of the mind. She seemed to have little care for or thought for the people of the larger world—seeming unable to comprehend the hideous crime and graft we were fighting for our fellow men there.

This was natural—but we grew to depend upon our own efforts when many times she could have made the way easier for us, because we knew she wasn't interested, and only delayed her going because of her affection for myself and a few of the others.

Let me describe the meeting between Hank McAfee and the girl whom he chose as his mate. Hank and I had strolled out into the beautiful ever changing landscape one afternoon for a breath of freedom and relaxation. Toward us she came, unobtrusively a part of the strange life of the mind—going about her instinctive work oblivious of others or their doings.

She was green, but inside her semi-transparent form were little curlicues of veins and transparent organs of a tiny complexity that made her strangely beautiful as a piece of metal tooled work is beautiful with little engraved lines over it. She was like a transparent microscopic animal enlarged by some magic into the macro world. Yet she was wholly woman—a green woman with an other-world beauty that overwhelmed the mind; being utterly out of the common-place concept of what beauty may consist.

We walked toward her and all her

being trembled in an ecstasy of strange emotion—emotion that was visible even as the blood pulsing through her arteries was visible.

Hank took her hand and said, "Hello, beautiful, what are you made of—glass?"

She laughed and her answer was heard in my mind—it had the same welcoming glad meaning that had her laugh. She was of a people intimately connected with the creation of thought, and she understood me, though she was incapable of speech as we know it. Her whole purpose in life was a kind of living universal connection for the macro thought messages. She listened to the thought of the upper man, and when anything went wrong with the nerve lines, she went there and fixed it. Sometimes she passed messages through her own body while others of her kind mended the nerve cables. She swam in the thick, almost material stuff that passed for air somewhat as a flying fish flies—by waving her long arms as she leaped lightly from red-soiled hummock to hummock. She was a beautiful strange, yet utterly human thing of a potent power of mind. She had an utterly pleasant manner of being. One was her enslaved friend from the first moment one began to realize the depths of her. Selfless as are all the people who work for the big body—the over-man—she had that community of interest so needed to keep humans on an even keel. She had had it bred into her by the nature of her life for many ages from her forebears. I learned a volume every time the thought pulsed from her lovely, green-spined head. I drank in a draft of utter beauty every time she stirred that long pale green transparency that was her body, the last word in feminine lure.

I knew that we were not meant

for each other, yet between us pulsed the deepest understanding and respect, so that always a part of me yearned toward her. Mena was apt to glance ominously at me as she heard these thoughts, but Mena was too wise a woman to show her jealousy, or to let it move her in any way.

The green girl understood all this and a million times more than I of all the other phantasmagoria of life moving around us will ever grasp. This mental world is one which one must be born in to grasp fully. I was kept from a dozen fatal errors daily by Mena or some other of our friends among the people of this world. I realized that life on another planet would be like this—something no man could ever fully understand unless born to it of an age of life under the same conditions. I never fully grasped the fullness of the life pulsing around me, but I did learn to navigate its myriad dangers safely and competently. But that is all I would ever learn—at least for years. For some things are not exactly learnable, but must be acquired with the slow intake of the breath—breathed in and absorbed by the body for a long passage of years. Then perhaps one could understand why the green people sang when the reflected sun sank beneath the red breathing horizon. Or why they danced under the imaginary moon in an ecstasy of—what? One can never know such things, any more than one can know the thoughts of a darting dragonfly—though one can sometimes grasp such things slightly.

WE NOW had pretty complete dope on the racket. There was a center where the dough found its way—a firm in New York which formed the front for the racket. It was called the Ajax Film Exchange—and they had a fast little fleet of trucks (which were really

armored cars) to transport the dough from the many prisons and hospitals to the big shots in New York. We decided to finish the job in one raid on the center in New York and then go with Mena for a year or two—to study the way of life in this strange world of thought and to prepare for a genuine life of development. We knew from Mena's words and our own observations that if we hopped from one young mind to another there was no need for death in this life. For the bodies we had acquired drew in energy from the strong flow of energy about the surface of the mind; and were just as strong as the life in the body supporting the mind, and no stronger.

We piled into ships, all two hundred of us, and behind us stood the girls, waving sorrowfully. Mena stood behind them on the red lawn in front of her strange house. It was a weirdly beautiful scene, the lush impossible landscape of the mind's surface—my own mind—and the long legged beauties of my own mind's dream creation—lit by the impossibly existant sun that was merely the mind's thinking of the actual sun above. I never could figure whether the actual sun above earth was, or was not, really the reflection of some other sun above the dead mind of the God who was the universe. Such infinite duplication in the mirror that men call energy or universe is not easy for a limited mind to grasp. The simple and beautiful maidens who were the fruit of the woman-tree wept openly every time we left on a trip—and the tears were streaming down their faces as they waived those long, lovely hands at us. Mena shaded her eyes with her hand and sent a last injunction—a warning into my mind.

"Make every move sure in your mind before you take any action. Don't get confused—for disaster can be complete

when the big minds become aware of your opposition."

We had planned every move with care. We had studied the mind of the copper who was going to be our vehicle to the Ajax Film Exchange. We knew his habits, and had every move he made timed to the minute. We found him near the entrance to the prison, and entered his head like a swarm of bees homing to the hive.

WE LANDED near that shining fringe of waving nerve ends we had learned to recognize so well by now. Shaky and I crept forward, parting the curtain. The shiny blob of flesh that is the ego when it is undetached during dream wandering lay at the center of the hollow of ego-center. We lay hold of the body gently and removed it from its tentacled grasp of the nerve cables. We screwed in the cable ends of our robot controller, and now had command of the officer's body. During the operation his car nearly crashed into the trees along the road, for he had started the car without our realizing he had done so. But Shaky averted the crash by taking control through the robot. The blob of flesh that was the ego of Officer Blom stood beside us watching wonderingly. Slowly his shapelessness gave way to his new concept of being—and he became a man like ourselves.

"Just what has happened, anyway?" he asked.

"We need you for a little job. When we are through we'll explain everything—until then sit tight. You'll learn, if you keep your ears open. Nothing will happen to you if you keep in mind we are friends. But don't force us to take action against you. We can be ruthless in carrying out our plans when it is justified."

Blom seemed satisfied with my

words, though a little dazed. We went back into our ship, leaving Shaky and Fred to navigate the body and car to our destination. The machinery of the body (the automatic nervous responses of the officer's physical make-up) would do most of the work of driving. Shaky had only to keep him conscious of a purpose, a destination.

We had the destination marked out on the map, carefully culled from the minds of the captured racketeers.

The scandal of the horrible nature of the mental hospitals and prisons as factories of ill health and lifelong torment was going to be liquidated if my new-found powers would do it. I had a lot of confidence in my outfit, and in the burning desire for revenge that had been seasoned into the grain of their character by years of injustice from the hands of the prison racket.

Shaky stopped the police car about a block from our destination, and parked it in front of a restaurant. We left the copper under the robot's control. He would sit like a zombi till we returned and reanimated him.

Our fleet of invisibly minute ships took the air and an hour went by while we found the place.

INSIDE the Film Exchange office, we did not stop in the outer offices. We had perfect information on the layout of the place. We sailed on through three rooms and under the door of the hidden inner sanctum. There were a dozen torpedoes sitting around—and behind a big desk the high muckety-muck, a very large person named Klug. I knew him from the Warden's description. Here he was, a former German Agent, and known to be a spy by many in the racket—still free long after the fall of Germany. And still getting fat off the destruction of American lives and American freedom.

I boiled—and set the little Mena-ship into a power-dive down into that Klug's brain. I was in a hurry and I didn't look around much. I should have. As Fred and I piled out and started through the fringe of shiny nerve fibers that always waves around a man's ego-center, a machine-gun let go nearby and splashed the red soil around our feet with deadly little spurts of fire. Over our heads sailed a flare and the red dusk that is so frequently the light of the brain world gave way to a blinding white light. Holding our eyes, Fred and I backed toward our ship. What in Hell had we run into?

As we stumbled through the door of the ship, I figured out the answer. Klug was a German; had been raised in the military tradition. Every thought in his mind from earliest childhood had been of military glory; of tanks and guns and planes; of all the paraphernalia of war that cluttered Nazi Germany. Hence his mind, and the people of his thought world, were likewise warlike and engaged in nothing but warlike activities. Hence we had been fired on as invaders the moment we showed our faces on their world.

I got the ship off the ground and shot it into the air at full power, but the air was full of flak—and screaming down upon my tail was a fighter plane. I realized that Klug might be in on the mind's secret—that we might have stumbled into a real hornet's nest. Even if his ego was not aware of the nature of the world of thought—still the people of the mental world might be able to pursue us even outside the mind. Everything depended on whether or not they had been able to build the same type of ship that Mena had built for inter-mind trips. Her ships were equipped with a generator that created a flow of vital energy without which these living bodies of the mind could

not exist except in the brain.

I soon learned the extent of the German's wisdom; for though the fighter planes turned back soon after we left the thick flying that was the skull of Klug, behind us a ship followed—and it was none made by Mena. It was a big thing that compared with our little boat as a clipper with a Piper Cub. She was rapidly overhauling us; and from her bow screamed a cannon shot. It exploded dead ahead. A blaze of pain shot across my face. I was wounded. It wouldn't be long now, I figured, staring back in horror as the big plane rapidly drew nearer.

The big ship grazed us as it passed overhead and wheeled back to try again.

Why didn't they fire?

I soon learned. As they passed over us again something grabbed our ship like an eagle grabs a fish—something clutched our hull overhead and we were jerked out of our course. We wheeled with the huge ship overhead and were borne back over the trail we had just covered fleeing our unexpected welcome from Klug's brain people. We were captives, and being taken back into the power of Klug's big brain-world before we had disposed of his ego-center. We would be at his mercy if he was conscious of our presence and purpose. But how could he know what we had only learned by the merest chance? How could he know?

The big ship settled beside a long barracks on a field where the planes lay in ranks by the hundred. I prayed to whatever Gods might exist down here that my buddies outside didn't come searching for us; but I knew they would. Overhead the flak still burst intermittently, and the flares sailed and exploded—everything was bathed in the glaring light of magnesium fire. Evidently something was overhead that

was to these people an enemy. Was it my buddies?

A SQUAD of soldiers waited outside the ship. Fred and I crawled out; there was nothing else to do. At bayonet point we were marched into the huge barracks-like building. I looked curiously at these people of the mind of the German agent, Klug, who doubled as an American racketeer. They were a curious kind of animal. I felt more surely than before that the inhabitants of the mind are definite creations of the thought of the person in whose mind they live. For these creatures were not exactly men. They were instead, very evidently Klug's ideal of the soldier. Taller than myself, they had pouter pigeon chests, marched with a precision and exaggerated goose step that was comical if I had had the composure to laugh at it. Their faces were quite wooden, yet fierce, with staring empty eyes. Their foreheads were low, their brows bulging, the whole face an idealization of the military character: symmetrical, big-featured, strong-chinned. They should have been men, but they weren't.

Not a one spoke as we marched into the office door. Four of them drew up at the side of the door, two others stood directly behind us, their weapons trained on our backs. We faced, across the desk, an officer. Like the soldiers, he was an idealization of what a German officer should be. A saber scar across his red cheek, his white teeth bared in a fierce grin as we stood in front of him. On his chest was not one or two medals but a full two dozen oversize decorations. On his shoulders epaulets with six-inch fringes. A wide belt held two huge pistols of a peculiar make, as well as a sword. Papers were piled on each side of his desk in stacks, and in his hand he held a sheaf of paper.

His voice was vibrant with deep, male tones a very large, impatient voice.

"Who are you? Make it fast."

It sounded like German, but like other voices I had heard down here, I understood the thought flow that pulsed his head rather than the words.

I decided to play innocent, since they did not know who or what we were.

"We are just travelers from a far place. We set the ship down to rest awhile from our journey and your soldiers fired upon us. We do not understand."

"It is unfortunate that you have seen our military installations," his thought sputtered at me. I will have to have you executed to keep our work from being talked about in other places. It is most regrettable." He smiled pleasantly. It gave him great pleasure to be able to order us to our deaths. "That is," he went on, "unless you have some information of value to me."

"Well," I said, desperately wondering just what information a mind like his would want—and whether he had a mind or not. I was still at sea, never quite believing that the people around me were real, here where thought was a thing, or a force or an animal or what have you. Or was this living matter thought, or a bit of the organs of thought, a plasma of thought that could take into its mind to walk, and talk, and die sometimes "Well," I said, "have you heard that Hitler is dead?"

"Who is this Hitler?" asked the officer.

"I thought you might know, but I guess I was mistaken. He was a great ruler in a far place."

"There is no ruler but the great Klug, the God who made us in his image. "The officer was furious with me. I had said there was a ruler. "There is only Klug, one and omnipotent. Do you understand?"

"Quite. Yes, I understand." I understood all right. I was in the midst of a nazi's dream world, and I didn't like it. A nightmare like a nazi's mind was no place to be. "There is only Klug, the mighty."

"That's right. Now what have you to tell me that might be so valuable as your life?"

AS I PONDERED, an orderly entered unctuously and whispered in the officer's ear. He looked at me meaningfully as he listened, and a gleam came into his eye.

"Ha, you have withheld something. Your ship; it is of a different construction than any of which we know. Tell me the details of its construction: You will live long enough to tell me that, I can assure you. But it may be unpleasant living if you are secretive."

"Yes, I quite understand your viewpoint. That ship is built of cuparalloy, and powered by atomo-duplex motors. The engineering details are not in my possession, but I might be able to get them for you if you would give me my liberty—and paid me appropriately for the plans." I made up anything in my fear of the fix I was in. I did not know any more than a jackrabbit what the ship was made of. It had been made from the mental projection of my big mind in the little world. How did I know what it was made of?

"Ah, you will get the plans." The officer's eyes gleamed. I was beginning to get the knack of such people as these imaginary Nazis. They were slaves to certain words, or ideas, and any snappy thinker could twist them around his finger by using the right set of thought images. *Plans* had been one of the triggers which actuated this man who was not a man, but only a simple set-up of thoughts and phrases actuating a body that Klug had dreamed up.

I decided to play on this. He made it easy for me. He leaned across the desk, offering me a cigar. I took one, though I never could get used to the flavor of mind-image tobacco. Then he pulled a decanter from under the desk and poured me a drink.

"Plans" he said in a glowing voice.

I had spoken the code word—I was a friend. *Plans*—how simple the mind that falls for the word, I thought. It had been a few such words and their foolish reactions to them that had sucked in the whole German people—sucked them into the whirlpool of a fool's destructive will. Falling for catch phrases was a characteristic of the German mind people as well as their larger brothers.

I decided to use a lot of catch-phrases; maybe he'd make me a present of the place. I let loose a barrage that I figured would bring him to his knees.

"Herr Officer—I can bring you the PLANS for a dozen types of ships far superior to anything I see on your field out there. I can bring you PLANS for military maneuvers such as will not exist for a million years in common life. I can bring you the whole battle PLANS for tactical maneuvers that have been tried by time—time that does not yet exist. For that ship you captured out there is more than a simple vessel of flight. It is a TIME MACHINE."

"Time machine. I have heard of such things. Tell me more."

I decided to use this boob fast, before he caught his breath.

"It would be better if I demonstrated the ship to you, then you would realize the value of what I have to offer. If you would accompany me on a short flight, I could show you how the mechanism swings the plane into hyper-space by a super-speed device that overcomes the time-flow-drag that keeps our own

world in its orbital atomic being of corpuscular vibrating-time that is our own time rate. From hyper-space we can pick out time and place of descent—into almost any time, or any place. Do you understand?" Such gibberish I had never spouted in all my life!

"I see that you may have something. But as you say—it is better if you demonstrate the remarkable ship. I can get you a great deal of money for such a ship—for the *plans*."

"Yes, for the *plans*, you *should* get me a lot of money. I wish I had the *plans* right here. We could get it over so much quicker. "I looked disarmingly into his cunning, yet vacant eyes. "So much quicker."

I could hear his pulsing, hidden thought: "*Yes, my friend, it would be over very much quicker for you if we had the plans.*" I resolved really to take this boob for a ride.

I FED him a little more baloney, and finally he heaved himself up from his rock-like position behind the desk and stalked ahead of me out to the plane on the field. The big ship had released the magnetic grapples with which it had captured us. Our plane had been wheeled from under the big bomber-type flyer. A dozen officers were examining the Mena-ship in detail, taking notes and gabbling to each other. From their thought I knew that they couldn't understand it at all.

Looking at their planes I saw that they were engined like a gasoline-fueled plane, though what they burned for fuel I hadn't yet learned. I didn't want to appear stupid in front of the big-shot I had duped into believing in my time-machine fairy tale—so I didn't open my big mouth and ask about their planes. I just looked at them superciliously, and thought hard—just in case they could understand thought too. In fact

they could, for they had no difficulty in understanding me—and I certainly don't speak mental-German. So when I thought of their planes as obsolete jokes, the bony masks they wore as faces grew a bit sober—more sober. They were a serious minded lot. If ordered to do so, any one of them looked capable of burning a thousand prisoners to death. Perfect Klug-type soldiers, they were. Very Germanic.

The big-braided brass helmet beside me barked something at them, and they fell back and stood at attention. We entered the little Mena-ship and my heart dropped into my boots as three of the flyer officers wheeled and entered a ship nearby. They were going to escort us aloft. How the devil was I going to get away, unarmed, with the big stuffed shirt to disarm and a fighting plane waiting to blow hell out of me if I tried anything. Then I remembered they couldn't shoot as long as his Nibs was with me—and I quit worrying. Something would break.

I jerked the control to full on, and as the little ship shot forward, the big Heinie fell backward, nearly sprawling on the floor. I pretended to help him to his seat again, guiding the ship with one hand. As I did so, I pulled one of the guns from his belt holster. Holding it in my lap, I pointed it at him. Then I pulled the stick back into my lap and the Mena-ship shot toward the heavens as if she was a scared bat out of a superhell. The brass-hat's face was a bit red as he looked into the muzzle of his own weapon. Behind me the escorting plane rose and followed hard on my tail. But they could not see my hands.

I knew they suspected nothing. So I kept the Mena in a steep climb, heading up and out. That ship was going to get darn tired if they waited for me to bring their boss back.

An hour went by and I mounted

steadily up and out. Long ago, I had passed through the mucky stuff that was the skull of Klug. The fighter plane had fallen behind. Still she trailed me, but I guessed that the pilot was getting weaker as I knew a man couldn't last long away from the vital essence that pervaded the mental world and formed its chief sustenance.

I felt well, and the face of the warrior beside me was a grim mask of frustration. I could not resist baiting him a little. It wasn't wise—but a guy does hate these militarists and the whole character set-up which they carry around engraved on their faces.

"You're the world's prize sucker, falling for a gag as obvious as the time machine stall I pulled on you. Why didn't you know better?"

He made no answer, only gritted his teeth a little and muttered a few teutonic imprecations.

I felt bad about Fred. There was no way we could go back and rescue him, even after I found the rest of the outfit. For we didn't have the equipment to fight an army such as Klug had dreamed up in his more ambitious moments of idle daydreaming. But there was an angle I had not noticed about these military models: if I could have looked back to the place from which I had fled, I would have seen a strange sight. Fred did see it. He told me about it afterward.

FROM the airfield to which the escorting plane had just returned, a procession filed mournfully. In front of it two priests, or bishops, clad somewhat in the medieval manner, except that instead of crosses, their robes were embroidered with swastikas. They swung censers and intoned a mournful chant. Straight toward the waving curtain of nerve stuff that shielded the ego-center of Klug's brain they filed, the

soldiers bareheaded, with their heads bowed. They stopped outside the curtain, and the two leading priests went up to the curtain and began to relate the singular occurrence of the loss of their general in a sing song of ritual. Inside the curtain a great body moved. Klug was waking to answer their ceremonious call. His great body loomed up inside and pushed aside the curtain. Klug did himself well in his dreams, for he was a foot taller than the native soldiers, and clad in all the glitter of a war-lord. The whole assembly fell upon its knees.

Klug shouted in the best overbearing Prussian manner: "Bring me the prisoner who is left behind by the other one who escaped."

Fred was pushed forward, and stood looking up at the resplendent dream figure of Klug. Fred knew that now was a good time to keep his mouth shut. So he kept his mouth shut.

"Well, tell me what this is all about," Klug was just dreaming, and Fred realized that his dream image was all interested in being a big shot; was not conscious of what was really going on. So he said:

"Please, Mister; I don't know myself what it's all about, I'm a stranger in a strange place. We set our ship down to take a rest and sleep a little—and they started to fire upon us. That's all I know about it, your Reverence."

Klug smiled broadly, flattered by Fred's fawning words. But inside Fred's head seethed a strong despite for Klug and everything like him. The mental men around him sensed this and drew away from him, expecting Klug to blast him with one mighty thought from the master body. But Klug was too wrapped in his dream of power to understand that anything else mattered.

"Where are you from? Why don't

you know this forbidden territory to mortals, except those who serve me?"

"Where I came from we never heard of the great and glorious God Klug—so how could I know you had forbidden this territory to lowly folk like myself? And why, now that I know of the wonder of your existence, mayn't I serve you as well as these others?"

Klug snorted. "Where has your companion taken my general? Answer my question."

"I don't know. I don't even know where they were supposed to go. They said nothing to me about it. How could I know?"

Klug snorted some more. "Take him away. When you find my general, bring him to me. You have all done very badly allowing this to happen. And get the information out of this man. It does not matter how—but get it."

The great Klug retired again into his screen of nerve ends, and became again the amorphous blob of flesh which is the ego of a brain. Klug had a very large ego.

So it was that Fred became acquainted with the rubber hose and other methods of getting information in Klug's brain.

AS I SOUGHT for the rest of the outfit in the, to me, vast reaches of the offices of the Film Exchange, I worried my head for a method of getting Fred out of the clutches of the militaristic folk of Klug's brain, without having to go back and rebuild an entire fleet capable of taking the place apart. Finally I hit upon a plan.

Near the door I found the fleet waiting for me. They had laid out the rest of the gang, and wondered what had delayed me. It didn't take me long to tell them.

Shaky shouted: "We'll go back and give those guys what for. They can't

do that to us."

But I pointed at the big, medal-covered chest of my captive general. "That's what we're up against in Klug's head. They worship his ego as a God, and he appears to them as a God—or a Hitler. How much Klug knows I don't know. But I have a plan. Here it is. We go back to Blom's brain with our captives. Two ships will go back to bring Mena after we get through with Blom. But we need Blom's brain first for my plan to rescue Fred.

ONCE back within Blom's good old American dream-landscape, we knew what to do. I got Blom's ego to dream me up as a figure that looked like Klug, while Shaky got Blom to change him into a figure that was a dead ringer for the General. Then the two of us got back into our ship. Our plan was to land on the airfield back there as the general returning, take charge. Then we could let our own fleet land before they got wise that the general wasn't the general, and we would have the place in our hands before they woke up. It was a good plan, and I saw no reason why it shouldn't succeed.

Shaky and I, in the transformed bodies which looked like the great Klug and the general, landed secretly some way from any of the military camps, in the lush jungle of red growths which is the flora of the mind. We wanted to look around a little before we walked into their clutches again.

In these evil minds such as Klug's, the people were evil in a stark abandonment that was fearfully, overwhelmingly frightful. They ate the lesser members of the roving population of the mind surface, but through some hereditary knowledge, left the essential workers of the body proper alone. But beauty and joy of the life in healthy minds was not there; instead a stark

revel of evil delight was the daily, continual program.

We watched such an orgy from the concealing fronds of the fern trees surrounding a clearing. It was a ceremonial worship of an evil god—and some growth of the mind was the living altar. The stark flesh of the altar was like a female form transformed into a rooted, solid growth. Upon it was placed the victims of the sacrifice, while over it the witch who led the orgy gestured and postured in an awful invitation to the soul to become a vessel for blood.

Over the scene loomed the vast projection of the dreaming face of the man, Klug, and the orgy was the actual life which answered the will of the man to evil pleasure. Naked and straining toward the altar the crowd crouched, watching while they drank a bloody juice extracted from some stimulating plant of the mind fields.

Upon the altar squirmed the bodies of several victims, shrieking for the death that was denied them.

The military aspects of Klug's mind were fully developed in the armies one saw marching, drilling and fighting everywhere—and these more horrible manifestations of his vile imagination were an adjunct as well as a cause of the military. The natives, the organized groups of sane people, tried to resist the trend of the evil life; but they controlled the armies through Klug's own evil desires and their nature gave them the right to rule. They were the priests, the religion of the mind world, and the army took their orders with the great dream-Klug's consent, conscious or unconscious.

The normal inhabitants' attempts to save themselves from being victims or debauchees of the cult were the opposition which the armies fought to overcome—and were successful. His mind

was a world in which those things happened which would have happened on earth if Hitler had conquered it. The lesser peoples fought and hid and fought again to save themselves from the fate of the slaves in the factories, to save their women from the brothels, to save their children from the evil teachings and physical debauching of the cult of evil which ruled.

This cult centered around the ego area, and the occasional appearances of Klug in his dream body as Almighty God in a uniform (with medals) were used by the priests to give their evil world cult a deity—and a power irresistible by any of the other mind natives. These opposition normals were in the minority and furnished both the victims and the slight opposition necessary to keep the thing active and able. The result, so far as we were concerned was to make the ego-center of Klug's mind inaccessible to our present equipment. We had plenty for the ordinary unarmed brain dweller, a human-like creature who seldom fought anything, living chiefly on the plentiful fruit of the mind fields. But we had no equipment capable of overcoming the vast armament of the warlike mind of Klug. Hence our strategy of posing as Klug and his chief mind-man general. Its success would turn the whole power of the immense military organization of this mind to our advantage.

This is the essential weakness of all highly centralized governments: one successful blow at the center gives the whole into the enemy's hands. The technique of using doubles has a lot in its favor.

WE DECIDED that sneaking around like this was doing us no good. So Shaky as the general and I as the great God Klug walked into the great barracks where Fred was im-

prisoned, and where I had bamboozled the general into entering the Mena-ship with me. There was instant acceptance of us by the soldiers. They had expected the general's return. I knew that our fleet hung out of sight beyond the thick skull of the German agent. As the imitation Klug (myself) and the general (Shaky) walked across the airstrip toward the great barracks, the soldiers and officers ran toward us and fell upon their knees. The place was ours. Klug, the great God Klug, had appeared in person. There was no question about. We just marched into the general's office and began to give orders.

The first order we gave sent them all to their quarters for inspection. Then while Shaky, marched around the barracks finding fault, the men stood stiffly at attention. I went out onto the field and flagged the waiting fleet down. As they landed I told them what to do, where the guns lay, and to take the place over. When Shaky got through with "Inspection" the army of the mental Nazis was locked in their barracks and this particular field was ours. It wouldn't take long to eliminate Klug.

Just when everything looked hunky-dory and we were getting ready to attack the ego-center, in walked the great God Klug and confronted me.

I HADN'T known for sure that he did walk, or do anything but lie in his ego-center and talk to the mental men—but here he was. As he looked at me an expression of amazement came over his face.

"Just why do you look so much like me?" he shouted. "Who are you? What are you doing here, dressed up in a uniform like mine?"

About that time Fred and Shaky appeared in the door behind him with a pistol apiece trained on his back. So

I said:

"Look behind you." I forgot for an instant the power the man had here in his own mind world—if he knew enough to use it. I guess Shaky and Fred forgot too, for they had hardly stepped in the door before he became aware of them and started to think about them as he would have them. The two men shrank visibly before my eyes, shrank and changed shape till they were simian in appearance. Klug had his back to me, and his thought for that or some other reason had no effect upon me. But I knew that unless something happened quick it would be all up with us.

I shot him. I pulled the gun from the holster and let go. But did Klug drop? Not a bit of it! He turned around to me with a terrible night-mare fear on his face, and held a hand over the hole in his chest where the bullet emerged. Why didn't he drop? Then I realized that this Klug was the physical embodiment of the big Klug's thought of himself in the dream state, and I would have a hard time convincing the macro Klug that he was dead. Hence the great strength of the focii of the whole mind's thought would keep Klug on his feet no matter how many holes I put in him.

But the fear on his face told me something else. Klug was really dreaming, he didn't consciously know that he controlled this whole world of the mind with his thought flows. Hence when his dream body was shot, he believed himself hurt. Hence he was hurt. He might even go crazy from the lack of a functioning ego if I put enough holes in this body before me. So, just for experiment's sake I put two more holes through the thing's chest. It was a peculiar weapon of these mental people's own invention, and the bullet was a development of the dum dum. It expanded when it struck, and how it ex-

panded! I could have put my fist in those holes in Klug. Blood ran in a seemingly inexhaustible stream from the wounds.

The ego is strong flesh, and Klug started to run and scream. As the big dreaming body realized that there was plenty wrong from the way things were going, the whole landscape changed terribly. The light died away and the whole scene became gloomy, like a funeral across the heavens. The strange, almost geometrical plant's shapes drooped, wilted by Klug's imagined weakness. The supporting field that held up our own bodies with its penetrative ever-flow became weak, and we ourselves drooped, wilted by the lack of thought flow.

Klug's ego ran stumbling toward the ego-center, and I after him. Behind me loped the simian, big-fanged and desperate-eyed things which Klug's dreaming ego had made from Fred and Shaky. This mind world was an unpredictable place. Mena would know what to do, but I did not. I ran as fast as my weakening limbs would let me, and downed Klug with a flying tackle. Then as I sat on him and Fred and Shaky came up I handed little Shaky the pistol.

"Go on ahead and fill the ego center with these things. Sever as many of those big nerve cables as you can. We can't wait to get any grenades. Do a good job."

Fred sat down beside me on the bull-like, struggling Klug. He was far stronger here on his own mind, but he was like a crazy child, in the dream state was doing and not really conscious of what he was doing.

Just how Mena managed to bring us to our senses here I don't know. But certainly we were more awake than Klug or some of these others. Perhaps it was the effect of the artificial vital

energy Mena manufactured with the generators of her ship motors.

We tied Klug's hands with our belts, and likewise his feet. But I knew it was an empty gesture here on his mind where his thought ruled the very shape of the land.

PRESENTLY Shaky came walking back. Around us the landscape kept on wilting, and some of it was dying. I wondered if the big Klug was dead, or only dreaming he was dead. Maybe the latter was true, but it was enough. We dragged the big body of the German toward our ships, and bundled him in. The whole fleet took off in a hurry, for the weakened soldiers, frightened by the catastrophic changes going on, had begun to burst out of their quarters with the help of grenades. As they streamed out of the huge buildings, firing at us, we streaked skyward. On our tails came a dozen planes. But they were not fast.

Our crews, waiting, had damaged the bigger vessels, had sabotaged the engines of the fighters, and the big battle planes which we knew were faster than our own, just in case we got Fred and had to run for it. Nothing was left them that could fly faster than a cargo ship.

We had Klug and we were heading for home. He didn't live to reach there, but died soon after we passed the skull of his body on our outward flight.

Hours later we landed on Mena's grounds. The green woman, the pink

tree-women, the little brown Hula dancers of my dreams, the whole beautiful dream that the bunch of us had cooked up for ourselves to live in, stood waiting and waving as we spiraled in to land. Somehow the tears flowed as we piled out and took our dream girls in our arms. Shaky, Fred and I were covered with blood. Fred was pretty badly damaged, his back a mass of whip cuts, his face battered out of recognition. But we knew what we could do, here in mental-land and Fred wasn't worried. Mena and I could fix him up in no time.

Mena scolded like a teacher when hunting season comes and half the class plays hookey. But she was very glad to see us.

Soon we would move to the wonderful young mind that Mena had selected. Soon a new and infinitely greater life for all of us would begin under Mena's tutelage. Then we would build a real outfit to take another crack at the gangsters who are the greatest enemy of American's freedom. So long as the gangsters thrive on the easy take—just so long would young Americans find themselves doomed to a life-time of dull and diseased imprisonment to keep the rolls of the institutions full. And just so long would we mental men fight the corruption. For Mena had planned our future carefully, and moving from young mind to young mind would keep us young and able to fight for the free life of all men.

THE END

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

★ *"The House"* ★
By Rog. Phillips

AN EERIE STORY THAT WILL TINGLE YOUR SPINE

★ The WORLD of DREAMS ★

By
SANDY MILLER

THE dream world has been compared to the tuning of the instruments before an orchestra plays; the waking world being the same instruments played together under a conductor. Though it is admitted that scraps of yesterday's experiences can be detected in this tuning of instruments, still the dreams are said to be patch-works with no significance, no meaning.

But this tendency to overlook our other life was not always true of man. In the early life of man, dreams were accepted as real. To the savage, the dream world was but a continuation of waking life with the same opportunities for friendship, good hunting and war.

Primitive races on the earth today are like early man in their enlargement of the world to include the world of the dream. If a Dyak of Borneo should dream he has fallen into a stream, on waking he would send for the wizard to fish for his soul with a hand net in a basin of water. And to the Zulu, the appearance of one of his ancestors in his dreams is explained as a sign of disaster, and he hastens to warn the rest of his tribe that the "itango" has come from the next life to give him warning.

To some of these primitive peoples, the characters in dreams are their souls in disguise. The Tojals of the Luzon Islands believe that if a sleeping person is rudely awakened, the soul might never return and he would die. Another tribe says that the soul's entry into the body is marked by a sneeze, and still others believe that disease is caused by the soul's entering the wrong body through mistake or revenge.

For centuries, the dream was thought to be the link between the living and the dead, playing a great part in Biblical episodes. Some of these were plainly messages, as when the Lord appeared before Joseph, the father of Jesus, in a dream, saying, "Joseph, thou, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." But there were other Biblical dreams that were veiled in symbols which only the initiated could understand.

Ancient Syrians, Babylonians, and Egyptians took their dreams seriously, thinking them messages from the gods. In these countries, special dream interpreters translated the communications from the other world. These interpreters were officers of the Court, and bore the impressive title "Masters of the Secret Things and The Learned

Men of the Magic Library."

For the Greeks and Romans, it was unthinkable to undertake a campaign without a dream interpreter. When Alexander the Great set out on his wars of conquest, the most famous dream interpreters were with him. The city of Tyre offered so much resistance that Alexander thought of abandoning the siege. Then one night he dreamt of a satyr dancing in triumph, and his interpreters declared that this foretold his victory over the city. Alexander then gave the order to attack, and Tyre was taken by storm.

Gradually the art of dream interpretation declined until it reached the level of superstition. Dream books came to be published using symbols concocted by various authors to interpret the objects of a dream. To dream of a man drowning meant disappointment in business; to dream of a snake meant that a loved one was false; and to dream of a locked box meant a fortune was coming soon.

It was only recently that a scientific interest in dreams was revived by Dr. Sigmund Freud, a neurologist of Vienna. Dr. Freud began his study of dreams while investigating the symptoms of mental disorder. Contrary to common belief, Freud found that the dream was the guardian of our sleep, whose function it is to discharge any disturbing thought or sensation which would tend to wake us up. Further, he discovered that all dreams have meaning, that the dreamer really knows the meaning of his dream, only he does not know that he knows and therefore thinks he doesn't. As proof of this, Freud performed an hypnotic experiment upon a man who when later asked what had happened to him under hypnosis claimed he didn't know. But when pressed, the man began to recollect and slowly huilt together the events as they had happened. So it is in dreams said Freud. These recollections are in our mind, but since we do not know that we know them, we believe that we do not know. Actually, he says the true meanings of dreams are in terms of wishes that we do not like to admit to having in our waking life. Soon Freud made dream interpretation one of his most important techniques in the new field of psychoanalysis. If it is true, as he says, that within dreams lie the clue to our personalities, dream interpretation opens a new life, a new world which waits for the future to fully explore it.

DEATH SEEMS SO FINAL

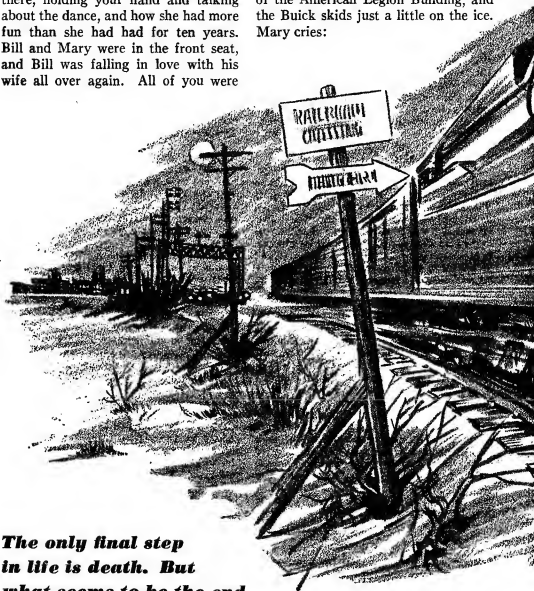
by **ALEXANDER BLADE**

ALL you know, is that you were in the rear seat of the black Buick sedan. Your wife was sitting there, holding your hand and talking about the dance, and how she had more fun than she had had for ten years. Bill and Mary were in the front seat, and Bill was falling in love with his wife all over again. All of you were

just a little drunk, maybe. Not very. Just a few beers.

You are going down the street east of the American Legion Building, and the Buick skids just a little on the ice. Mary cries:

***The only final step
in life is death. But
what seems to be the end
may be only the beginning . . .***





The searchlight of the locomotive picked out his body like an evil eye of doom

"Bill! Stop! There's a train coming."

You don't even catch the full meaning of her voice, because your brain is a little numb.

You see the blinker light winking at you like a blood-shot eye, and the huge searchlight of the locomotive bearing down upon you. Your wife's fingers cut into your arm and it hurts. Then the car is spinning.

Then a lot of things happen all at once. The grinding, crushing blow of steel against steel. A cloud of hissing steam released in your face. The huge eye of light that blinds you as you hold on to your wife and she screams.

The eye keeps right on coming at you and you can't escape it. The car seems to topple end over end with you inside it. You can't find your wife now. Something has torn you away from her. There is still the grinding of steel, and then—silence.

Everything is very quiet. You try to move and you can't move. You are motionless, and there is no feeling in your body. There is feeling and yet, no feeling. It's like the surgeon's knife, cutting through frozen flesh. *Your flesh.* It's like feeling the knife as it cuts, and yet feeling no pain. You lie there, wondering about the others. At first it doesn't matter much.

FACES gather around you. You stare up at them, every thought moving around in your mind like crystal-clear waves. You see your wife. Her face tells you that she is unhurt. Then you know that she is shocked. Her eyes become distended with horror. There is a face with a trainman's cap above it. There is a face with a policeman's cap, and badge. You would like to tell them that everything is all right. That you aren't hurt. You hear their voices.

"Reed? Reed, why did it have to happen?"

It's your wife, and she's sobbing and then screaming. You try to smile and say:

"Don't worry, Hon. I'm okay. Honest I am."

But they're dragging her away. *They're dragging her away from you.* The voices are loud, then soft. There are many, and then but a few. There is a voice that comes more clearly than the others. It's Doc. Webber. He acts as though something awful has happened. You want to speak to him. Maybe you *do* speak, but your facial muscles are frozen. You can't move your lips, or force a sound out.

"I'm paralyzed," you tell yourself. "I'm okay, only I'm paralyzed. Webber will understand."

"Better call the coroner," Webber says.

Call the coroner?

What in the devil is he talking about? Me, *I'm* not dead. *I* don't want the coroner. Webber rolls up his stethoscope and pushes it into his pocket. You see him standing there, looking down at you. Where does he get that stuff? He's nuts. *You're not dead.*

You know that no one is talking now. All of a sudden they stop. The black monster on the track is puffing and steaming. You hear it. You can't turn your head or roll your eyes to look. There is a little circle of faces staring down at you. You can't feel. Not *really* feel. Just that dull, painless feeling that comes from being frozen stiff all over.

Some of the faces are crying. Some of them are regarding you with dull, curious eyes. Eyes that have never seen anything like you. Eyes that are enjoying what they see, in a drunken, animal way.

"Damn you," you scream inside.

"Damn you ghouls. Go away. Get out of here. I'm not dead. *I'm not dead.*"

Inside you're sobbing and screaming and swearing. All that pent up emotion is trying to escape, and can't. Your thoughts tumble over and over each other. Bewildered, frightening thoughts.

Then there is another face. It is Ben Parish, the coroner. *Now*, you think. Now they'll leave me alone. They won't think I'm dead. Ben will tell them I'm okay. That Doc Webber is crazy.

You played poker with Ben Parish last Saturday night. You asked him how many stiffes he had to pronounce dead, before he earned enough dough to get into that poker game. He didn't laugh. He didn't think it was funny.

Now he isn't laughing. He's looking down at you, his hands thrust deep into his coat-pockets.

He shrugs and says:

"There couldn't be any doubt, could there? Not with him in that condition?"

He turns away.

In *what* condition? Is he nuts? Is he trying to say that you're *dead*?

Suddenly the panic is worse. It's so bad that it chokes you. It engulfs you in a fear that is worse than anything else in the world.

Something black drifts up over your face. It falls over your eyes hiding everything from sight. You do not feel it. You recognize it, because you remember. You remember seeing the dead covered with black.

They are taking you away.

They are taking you where they take the dead. They don't understand. They can't. You need a nurse. A pretty nurse in a stiff, white uniform. You need a doctor and a hospital. You need an operation. Yes, by God, you need an operation. This is insane. It's

—it's . . .

But you can't move and you can't speak. You suffer pain, but it isn't physical. It's mental.

They are taking you away, and you can't reason with them.

You lie there in the black sea of a lost world. You hear sounds. The sound of men talking in low voices. The sound of wood against wood. Metal scraping metal. Then you are alone. Completely alone.

THE siren starts gibbering in a low moan. They are driving slowly. They are showing respect for their dead. People—your friends, are lining the sidewalk. People you danced with and drank beer with, staring through the big windows of the ambulance, looking at the black, man-shape inside.

Suddenly you're all burned up inside. You're angry at them all. They are fools. Unreasoning fools. They are incapable of understanding even simple things. They should *know* that you're alive.

And Doc Webber's voice is whispering softly:

"Better call the coroner."

* * *

You know where you are now. There is only one place for them to take you. You don't feel with your body. You feel with that vibrant, suffering mind. You know that the ambulance is turning and bumping over a rutted driveway. You know, because you have memories. You hear. Oh, yes, you *hear* clearly. The voices are here again. They aren't hushed now. They are loud and clear. They are the voices that come when dead men stop being souls and become bits of business.

"Too bad it had to be him. Always liked him."

You're being moved. No sensation

of moving. Just sounds that piece themselves into an explanation of what is happening. Sounds that bring back memories.

"All of them were drunk. Funny, though, him the only one hurt. Tough on his wife."

"Damn you, Jim Dunn," your mind screams. "Any time you bury me, you'll hear about it. Let me go. Tell my wife I'm all right."

It doesn't come out. The words don't come from your lips. You know Jim Dunn's smooth, puffed face. You talked to him tonight, at the dance. Now he's taking you to *his* place. Dunn's Funeral Parlor. You've been there before, with him. You've been living two blocks from it for fifteen years. You'd made lousy jokes about his business.

"Stiff competition, huh, Jim?"

The joke always fell flat with Jim. He didn't like to be kidded, not about his business. But, he wasn't going to bury *you*. No one was.

Or was he? You can't speak. You can't move. You can only think—and hear. There aren't any voices now. The black stuff still covers your eyes. You are in a room, and you know all about that room. You're on top of a long table. You've seen the table before. You remember the afternoon Dunn had you visit the Funeral Parlor. He had a body there, working on it. It wasn't allowed, that visit, but no one checked up on you and it didn't do any harm.

"We have to get the family's permission before we embalm them," Dunn said. "We let them lay overnight sometimes."

Your mind is suddenly like a cornered rat. It is baffled. It's a wild thing, clawing uselessly at the heavy bars of a cage. You can't break those bars. Inside you, you're sweating and swearing and praying, all at once.

You're the human animal—cornered.

They can't. They can't, you tell yourself time after time. If you could only call your wife? If *she* would come? It's no use. Rest.

Rest and save it. Save the fight that's left inside you. You're alone now and you're beginning to understand that by *their* standards, you maybe *are* dead. Maybe. They all think you are. Webber said so. Ben Parish said so.

"There couldn't be any doubt could there . . . in that condition?"

In what condition?

You lay quietly because you *can't* move, not even your eyelids. You keep on thinking, though. You think of everything. Any way out? No, there is no way out. No way.

THERE is a light. It is harsh and bright, but it does not hurt your eyes. Instead, it shocks your mind back into renewed thought. The black cloth drifts away. You remember all the things that happened when you stood in this room watching Dunn working. No pain. No feeling. Just voices.

"His wife called last night. She's taking it pretty well. Now, if this bothers you, get out of the room. I wouldn't have let you in here if you had known him personally. Sometimes I let friends in. Not often."

You think, sure, you let them in. *I've* been here. I was here once and I wish I had never come. I wouldn't have known about this. That would have been better.

A quavery, uncertain voice.

"I'm not accustomed to this sort of thing. Maybe I can't take it. Don't like the sight of blood very much."

Your mind starts to scream and scream.

"Get him out of here," you shout. *"He isn't going to watch. I don't want*

anyone to watch. I don't want . . ."

They didn't know. You couldn't tell them.

"Don't like the sight of blood very much."

Far away, an electric motor was humming. Just a small electric motor.

"Badly cut up," Dunn's voice said. "Have to use facial restoration. Won't have to touch the legs or hips."

"Won't have to touch . . ."

"You don't have to touch me at all. I'm alive. I'm all right. Leave me alone."

You are writhing in mental pain. You are fighting—against everyone. Against the world. You're sweating and sobbing inside, *all inside*.

The motor goes on humming. Then you're glad because Dunn's fingers drift over your eyes and close them. You're glad because you don't have to look. That makes it easier, because you know you couldn't stand to see it—not even a little bit.

"I'm getting out of here," a frightened voice says, and chokes. The door slams. Jim Dunn chuckles. It's just a tiny sound. A joke he put over on humanity. He is humming. His voice doesn't have any more tone to it than that cursed motor.

Humming—singing—and you dead. No, not *really* dead.

SO MANY voices. You know where you are now. You know because there are so many voices, and all the little sounds are familiar to you. The sound of a squeaky door—a water tap being turned off—the creaking of a certain step. These are sounds that you lived with for years and years.

The voices come to you and drift away again, quickly.

"Your husband is at rest. Take it bravely. He didn't suffer. We have that to be thankful for."

Why? you ask. You want to open your eyes and reach for your wife's hand. You know that she is there. You hear the muffled, sobbing sounds. Then even those are gone.

He didn't suffer.

What did she think was happening now? What did this woman's voice think was happening inside you?

"Suffer little children to . . ."

Only two words from your wife's lips. Two stunned words.

"Oh! God?"

Two words. That was all.

Then lots of words, all washed into one sea and drowning there. Words forgotten before they were spoken. You remember a man's voice. A neighbor's voice. All you remember about him? Once he borrowed a shovel and didn't bring it back. You never liked him after that.

"He was drunk. They all were drunk. Tough, but he had it coming to him."

Then music. Terrible, wheezing organ music. Words moved around in your mind like lazy, poisonous snakes, spitting their venom into you. A gentle, old lady's voice, secretly tense with excitement.

"I always said, death is so final."

Is it? You should know. You have all the answers. You should be able to sit up and tell that old voice that she's off her trolley. She's batty. She's got a lot to learn.

Something goes "plop."

It's the soft gentle plop of a door closing when there is air-pressure in the room.

The sound of a coffin closing and the air fighting back with little sucking, futile sounds of pressure against softly padded silk.

Maybe you *will* die now. Maybe you will die because there is no more air.

You know that isn't it. You aren't breathing. You haven't been breathing for a long time. Your mind just keeps on functioning clearly. It moves like a well plotted graph. Up and down. Hatred and love. Hope and despair. Up and down. Your thoughts—plotted on a graph.

Thinking—thinking . . .

ONLY sounds now but no voices. Creaking casters—engines roaring to life—bumping sounds against the walls of your prison.

It's hard to concentrate on individual thoughts. You know only the white hot terror inside you. You know that you left a woman behind—crying.

"Guess he had it coming."

My God, they don't know the half of it.

The slow, lazy creak of metal against metal. Wood against metal.

"There could be no doubt . . . in that condition."

Sound. Maybe a voice, far away. No words. A droning voice. Then, like heavy voltage shooting into you. No pain. No *physical* pain. Just the pain of fear.

"Plop—plop—plop."

Then faster and faster.

"Plopplopplop."

An avalanche of sound. Heavy, crushing sound, echoing around you. Then, silence. Dead silence. Your mind didn't mean to create that pun.

Memory. Memory so sharp that it slices at your thoughts like a razor.

Formaldehyde turns the flesh to a resinous substance. It preserves perfectly. Sometimes as long as five hundred years.

"Very interesting, Undertaker Dunn, dealer in defunct bodies. Very fascinating. *But how long after that does the mind continue to function?*"

You wonder.

"Death seems so final."

No more voices. No more sound. All of it gone. You laugh weirdly inside yourself. Hysterical laughter that has no outlet.

Dead silence. I'll say it's dead silence. How long is five hundred years? How long—is time? How can the mind remain active and be tortured within you? What trick has death played on you? Will the mind go on thinking, even with the body gone?

No answer. No answer within that pain warped mind. You'll have plenty of time to answer those questions. Plenty of time. Your bed is made. It's your death bed. Lie in it.

"I always said, death is so final."

SPACE SHIPS LIMITED

No. 1

By JACKSON ROSS

Collisions with Meteoroids

THE Universe Daily Times is screaming the news in its morning headlines:

GIANT SPACELINER MISSING
168 Passengers Aboard Starship
Believed Lost on Trip to Mars

The story goes on to report that no trace of

the huge intrasolar system craft has been found. Congress is demanding an investigation. This is the third space ship lost under mysterious circumstances within the year. Trans-Galactic Travel Lines is hard hit. Many passengers are cancelling future trips. The Space Pilots Union is demanding increased pay for the great risks of flying the new modern craft that had been expected to revo-

lutionize space travel. The Space Travel Board has grounded all the new jet craft indefinitely.

No clues? Wait a minute. On page 32 of the same paper there is a brief paragraph from the Federal Observatory that a new nova had been caught in the telescopes that night. It was especially strange, the astronomers thought, because the flash had seemed to last no more than a few seconds. Several days later spectroscopic examination of the color film had provided enough evidence to indicate that the "nova" was no exploding star after all, but probably an exploding space ship.

What had caused the explosion? No one would ever know for sure. Even if the intrasystem patrol were able to bring back any of the wreckage for analysis it would be extremely difficult to tell. The chances are, though, that it was the same great hazard that had dogged space flight since its beginning—collision with one of the meteoroids which swarm through space . . .

In 1946, the release of atomic energy for the first time has given us the potential power to fly through space. A good many people accept without question the idea that in their lifetime man shall escape from the earth into the black voids between planets.

Today we are a long way from building a power plant which would make such flight possible. And once such an engine has been built there will be many other difficulties to meet. But the most important is that which wrecked our imaginary space ship above—collision with meteoroids.

The other problems of fuel, engine, supplies, construction may some day be overcome because we can control them. But it will be a long day before we can control the free movement of meteoroids through space.

What are our chances of hitting a meteoroid on a journey between the planets? First of all, collision with a very large one is unlikely. Venturesome men and women undoubtedly would be willing to take that chance if it were the only one necessary. But it might not require a large meteoroid to wreck a space craft. At speeds as great as those necessary to travel through space, collision with even a small particle might cause irreparable damage.

Although astronomers use the word "swarms," to describe concentrations of meteoroids, by our thinking this is an exaggeration. Actually, meteoroid dust is rare in the vast and unexplored void between the stars. Nevertheless, every day, according to Dr. Joseph Kaplan of the University of California, an estimated 75,000,000 meteoroids collide with the earth's atmosphere. Almost all are so small that they are burned up by friction before they can reach the earth's surface. Only an infinitesimally small number are big enough to fall to the ground.

Dr. Kaplan estimates that the most concentrated meteoroid "swarms" average only about one gram (1/30 of an ounce) in 20 cubic miles of space. And the earth, by comparison with a space ship, is enormously big to sweep in such a number of meteoroids. Nevertheless, flight through space not only would be extremely risky, because of this hazard, but a risk that can be calculated in advance.

LET us assume that our ship has a frontal area the size of an ordinary railroad passenger car or a very large commercial plane. Certainly this is the smallest craft possible to carry our supplies, manpower and engines. In such a craft we would collide with a gram of stardust, on the average, every $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 million miles.

If we were heading out for Mars, the chances are we would collide with about a dozen gram before arriving at the red planet. But if any of those particles were very big we would never get there at all. We would increase the hazard of future space travelers by becoming meteoric dust ourselves.

These calculations are only for such relatively near operations as our own solar system. When we go beyond that to the planets which may be circling other suns in our galaxy, the problem looks pretty impossible at the moment. Distances are so great that we would have to attain a speed approaching that of light—about 180,000 miles per second.

At such a speed we would expect to fly through a gram of dust every 15 to 20 seconds. It is inconceivable that we could keep this up very long without hitting something really big. The headlines in the Universe Daily Times could only report that another space ship had disappeared somewhere out toward Betelgeuse.

Must we assume, then, that space travel is a practical impossibility? It would be as foolish for anyone to predict that man would never travel through space as it was for Simon Newcomb 40-odd years ago to predict that man would never fly.

Perhaps it will be possible in some future day to project a repelling electrical "field" ahead of the space ship. It might be able to disperse the dust particles ahead of the ship much as the same poles of different magnets repel each other.

But it appears impossible that such rays could ever project ahead faster than the speed of electricity itself—or of light which has the same speed. If this is true, we are limited to travel within the solar system. Interstellar distances are too great. We could not go fast enough to travel them in safety.

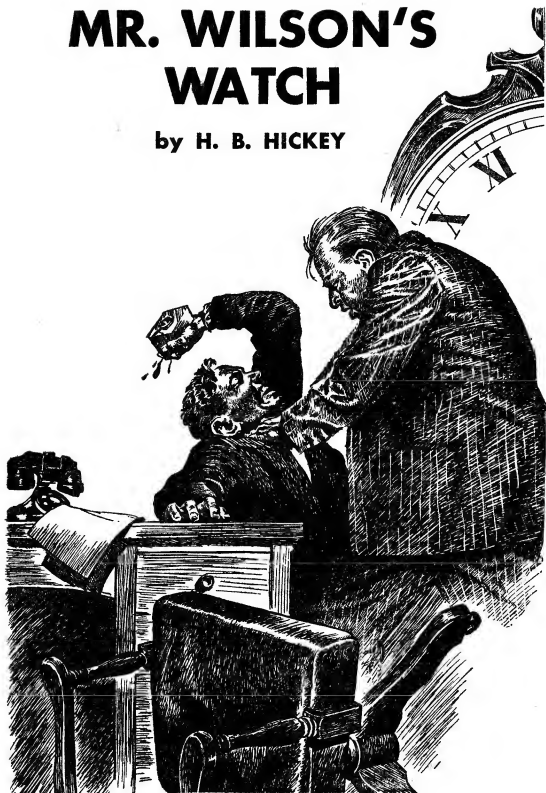
Poets have written longingly of stardust for years. But in the future, it may well be the one greatest bazaar and problem of interspatial flight.

THE END

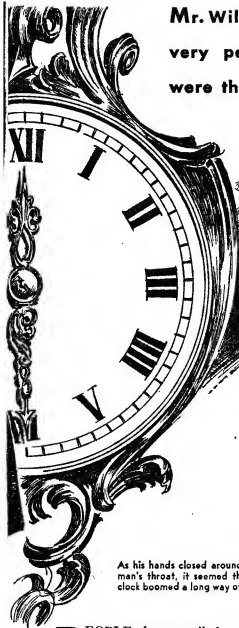
CONTINUE THIS NEW SERIES IN COMING ISSUES

MR. WILSON'S WATCH

by H. B. HICKEY



Mr. Wilson had a watch—which was not a very peculiar fact certainly—but there were things this watch did—by itself...



As his hands closed around the man's throat, it seemed that a clock boomed a long way off...



between small town and big city dress Mr. Wilson was hard to type. His suit, though neat and clean, was reminiscent of lavender and lace, and his string tie was half hidden by a tall cellulod collar. Behind shell-rimmed spectacles his bright blue eyes were utterly unworldly.

He approached the revolving door with trepidation. Fascinated, he watched it disgorge people into Chicago's State Street. At last there came a lull and the door slowed sufficiently for Mr. Wilson to entrust himself to it.

Feeling rather breathless he returned the floorwalker's smile. At the floorwalker's, "May I help you, sir?" Mr. Wilson said, "Oh, I do hope so!"

The small man with the rosy cheeks explained himself. "Your sign in the window says you do expert watch repairing. Is that so?"

The floorwalker assured him that it was. "If you will step over to the back counter a clerk will help you."

Carefully, Mr. Wilson threaded his way through the crowds in the aisles between the jewelry show-cases and ar-

PEOPLE always smiled at Mr. Wilson the way they smiled at babies and sweet, fragile old ladies. It was the smile reserved for those who have the magic quality of being remote from the hustle and bustle of life, the smile that has more protective tenderness in it than humor.

In a day when the spread of the chain store has eliminated the difference

rived safely at the back counter. He wiped his brow with an immaculate handkerchief and waited for someone to notice him.

At last a smartly turned out young woman came to his rescue. "You wish to have a watch repaired?" she asked.

"Yes, I do," said Mr. Wilson. He unbuttoned his suit coat and with the aid of a thick gold chain hauled a massive watch from his vest pocket. The timepiece was gold, but of ancient vintage, and its double covers were worn to a shiny smoothness.

The young woman took it from Mr. Wilson and snapped open the face cover. For a moment she stared at the face and then, with a puzzled expression, held the watch to her ear.

"It seems to be running," she said. "Sounds as good as the day you bought it."

"Oh, I didn't buy it," Mr. Wilson informed her gravely. "It was my grandfather's good luck watch. He left it to me in his will."

MR. WILSON suddenly remembered that his derby was still on his head and hastily removed it. He leaned across the counter and spoke in a confidential tone. "It really is a fine watch. I am a teacher of chemistry in a village high school, and do you know that watch has kept such perfect time that I have not been late to school in thirty years!"

The young woman compared the watch-time with an electric clock on the wall. "As far as I can see, it still keeps perfect time," she told him.

"That's just it," Mr. Wilson said.

The clerk stared at him suspiciously. "I'd better get a man from the repair room." She disappeared through a door and returned a moment later with a man whose right eye showed the mark of the jeweler's magnifying glass.

The repair man smiled confidently. "Now, just what is it that seems to be wrong with your watch, sir?"

Mr. Wilson hesitated and the other prodded him. "Does it lose or gain? Does it run slow or fast?"

"It . . . it isn't quite like that," Mr. Wilson stammered. "You see, the watch runs perfectly. But every day it gains one hour!"

"Then it must run fast!" the repair man asserted.

Mr. Wilson seemed unconvinced and the other leaned across the counter to explain the matter to him.

"Sometimes," the repair man said, "the gain is so slight that it is hard to detect. We have a machine that compares the tick of your watch with an electric clock. It will take just a minute or two for me to do that."

He took the watch and disappeared through the door. Mr. Wilson waited patiently for him to come out.

Ten minutes later the repair man returned. His face was red and he handed the watch back to Mr. Wilson with an angry gesture. "That watch runs perfect!" he barked.

"Doesn't it?" Mr. Wilson smiled. "And yet it gains an hour every day! I have already sat up all night watching it and it doesn't gain a second. Then suddenly," he snapped his fingers, "just like that, before my very eyes, it has become an hour later!"

The repair man shook his head. "That sure is too bad. But I'm afraid we can't do a thing for you."

Mr. Wilson put the watch back in his pocket. "Golly," he said. He realized that the young woman had heard him and he blushed. He picked up his derby and scurried away, embarrassed.

The repair man looked at the girl. She pointed her forefinger at her temple and described several circles in the air. The man nodded knowingly . . .

Mr. Wilson walked slowly toward Michigan Boulevard. The day was unusually clear and sunny for Chicago and he decided to walk to his rooming house instead of taking a bus.

ACROSS the boulevard he noticed a clock atop a huge advertising sign. The hands pointed to exactly eleven o'clock. Mr. Wilson pulled out his watch and compared it. His watch showed twelve!

He wanted to go back and show it to the repair man but remembered that the young woman had heard his epithet and decided that he could not face her. But golly! His watch did that every day! And he knew that sometime in the next twenty-four hours it would do it again.

Chicago bewildered Mr. Wilson. The impersonal attitude of the people, their confident, swift pace, and the countless rushing autos which seemed always on the verge of collision yet escaped miraculously; all these brought a yearning for the quiet streets of Mr. Wilson's little village.

The little man found a five-and-ten and went in. He had been eating the same thing for lunch every day since he came to Chicago but selecting something different was too adventurous for him. He ordered a hamburger and a glass of milk.

Purchasing a large bag of peanuts Mr. Wilson again braved the crowds. At the Art Institute he started to cross the boulevard, hesitated, and found himself in the center of the street blocking traffic. Brakes squealed and motorists leaned out of cars to curse. When they saw Mr. Wilson they changed their minds and waited, smiling, for him to cross.

He found a bench in Grant Park. After a while the birds came and ate the peanuts he scattered on the walk. Some,

more brave, perched on his wrist and ate from his palm. Soon the peanuts were gone. Mr. Wilson rose and looked at his watch. It was eleven forty-five.

He would have just enough time to go to his room and clean up for his appointment at twelve-thirty. If all went well he would be able to go home in a few days.

The clock atop the Illinois Central station at Roosevelt Road was his direction finder and soon he was on the old side street where his boarding house stood. The station clock was visible from the front porch where Mrs. Grady stood.

She smiled fondly at the little man who came up the steps. "I was beginning to worry about you," she said. "Where have you been?"

"To see the sights," he said gaily.

She shook her head sadly. "The wicked city is not for the likes of you," Mrs. Grady said softly. "I've been worried about you since you came last week."

She looked up toward the clock as a church bell began to toll somewhere. "And is it noon already?" she asked. "I'll be having to go in for my radio program."

HER room was the first inside the door. Mr. Wilson continued to the end of the long hallway and entered his own room. The wallpaper was alternately faded and brown but the worn cotton blanket on the iron bed was clean and the floor was scrubbed almost white.

Removing his hat and coat, Mr. Wilson poured a basin of clear water and carefully washed his hands and face. Then he combed his thin hair. From a cracked Gladstone bag he selected a fresh collar and buttoned it onto his shirt. When he had re-tied his string tie he looked at himself in the bureau

mirror.

"There! That's better," he said to his image.

His watch told him it was ten minutes past noon as he hurried by Mrs. Grady's open door. From inside the room came an announcer's honeyed words about a breakfast cereal.

Mr. Wilson walked toward the manufacturing district a mile away. His features glowed with anticipation. If all went well he would be on his way home in another day!

He found the building he wanted. It was smaller than its neighbors and dingier. The elevator was not on the main floor and Mr. Wilson didn't want to bother the operator by ringing so he walked up two flights of rickety stairs.

Near the middle of the dark corridor he found the office. On the gray glass window was neatly stenciled, **RAYNARD MEARS, PATENT ATTORNE.**

Mears was a stout man, middle aged, with shifty dark eyes. He greeted Mr. Wilson heartily.

"A little early, eh?"

"I'm very sorry," Mr. Wilson apologized. "I must have walked more swiftly than I intended."

Mears laughed. "Think nothing of it! I am always prepared to see my clients." He waved at a green leather chair with a sagging seat. "Have a seat, Mr. Wilson, have a seat."

Mr. Wilson sat down gingerly. "I do hope you have something to tell me today, Mr. Mears," he said.

"Indeed I have!" said Mears heartily. "But first let me say that you are a remarkable man, Mr. Wilson, a remarkable man!"

"Not at all," said Mr. Wilson shyly. He blushed.

"Indeed you are! To think of an obscure teacher of chemistry discovering a thing like that. Why, it's amazing,

that's what it is, amazing! You will be ranked with Edison, sir, with Edison!"

"Oh, really, Mr. Mears," Mr. Wilson protested. "After all, I have plenty of free time and my own little workshop in my basement. It was simply a matter of experimenting until I hit on something."

"Such modesty is all too rare," Mears complimented him. Mr. Wilson blushed again.

"But to get on," Mears continued, "I have gone over your papers thoroughly. It seems that you have omitted a vital part."

Mr. Wilson looked down. "I confess that I did . . . and deliberately, too. I . . . I hoped that the information I gave you would be sufficient to determine whether my discovery was patentable. But I do have the rest with me," he added.

MEARs breathed a faint sigh of relief and waved a thick finger at Mr. Wilson. "You are more worldly than you pretend to be," he said playfully. He chuckled. "So you do have the rest with you, eh?"

Mr. Wilson nodded. "And you think that it is patentable?" he asked eagerly.

Mears started to say, "You're damned right!" but caught himself. Instead, he said, "You're right, I do."

To cover his momentary confusion Mears reached into a drawer and brought out a thin sheaf of papers. "Just add the rest to these and we'll get started at once," he told Mr. Wilson.

The little man brought from an inside pocket several folded sheets and put them on the others. Mears clipped them all together. He smiled.

Mr. Wilson smiled too. "It makes me happy to know that my worries will soon be over," he said.

"Indeed they will," Mears assured

him. "You are going to be a rich man, Mr. Wilson, a rich man!"

Mr. Wilson's reaction was unexpected. "A rich man?" he cried. "Oh, no! I don't want to be wealthy! I have quite enough for myself. In a few years I shall have my pension. I meant simply that it would relieve my mind to know that I had the patent."

Mears lost control. "Why, that's insane!" he snarled. "We could set up a company and make millions!"

Mr. Wilson nodded. "I know. But that is just what I do not want! My discovery has possibilities for evil as well as good. I intend to turn it over to the government and I understand that the process would be facilitated if I got a patent first."

Mears reddened. "The government?" He got to his feet and stood glaring down at Mr. Wilson. "Are you trying to make a fool of me?" the stout man roared. "Do you realize how hard I've worked to prepare these papers?"

"I . . . I thought your fee was . . . was in compensation for that," Mr. Wilson stammered.

"Compensation? How could your paltry few dollars repay me for sleepless nights spent poring over these papers?"

"But . . . but . . . there wasn't really so much. . . ." Mr. Wilson began.

Mears ran from behind his desk and glowered down at him. "Could you have done it? Well! Then let's have no more foolish talk about giving this to the government for nothing!"

The big man went back behind the desk and pulled out several prepared sheets. "I have here, all drawn up," he told Mr. Wilson, "some contracts. You and I are going to form a company and we will share the stock equally. Of course my knowledge entitles me to more but I want to be fair."

Mr. Wilson showed spunk. "Absolutely not!" he said tremulously. "My discovery could be too dangerous in the hands of private people. I shall not sign any papers at all!"

Mears was surprised. Then he sneered. "You won't, eh? Then you'll get nothing at all! I've got the papers and I'm going to keep them!"

Mr. Wilson looked as though he were about to cry and Mears laughed at him. "What do I care about evil or good purposes? I'll use your discovery in the way that makes the most money for me! Now, are you going to sign?"

MR. WILSON'S chin quivered but he got up and came toward the desk. "That discovery is mine, and I won't let you steal it," he said.

Mears put the papers in his drawer and laughed at the little man. "You won't let me?" he roared. "Why, you little pipsqueak, I'd like to see you stop me!"

He stood up. "Now get out of my office before I throw you out!"

"I . . . I'll call the police," Mr. Wilson threatened.

"Go ahead. I'll tell them you're a nut. You look like one. I'll tell them that you're trying to steal the discovery from me! I'll have you arrested!"

In his fear of the city Mr. Wilson thought that Mears would be able to carry out his threat. The little man was shaking violently but he fought to overcome it.

"You give those papers back to me!" he cried in a voice that had become a high falsetto.

"Make me," Mears laughed.

Mr. Wilson came around the desk and started to open the drawer. The stout man pushed him roughly away.

"Now get out!" Mears snarled.

Wilson came back violently. "I want my papers!" he said.

Mears got up and grabbed Mr. Wilson by the throat. The big man's eyes were vicious.

"I've got a good notion to wring your skinny neck!" he snarled. He applied a little pressure and Mr. Wilson felt the room whirl about him.

Mr. Wilson's hands fluttered in desperation. They touched something. An inkstand! Blindly he seized it and swung it around with all his strength.

Had Mears been standing closer it would have gone around the back of his head. As it was, the inkstand caught him over the right eye and drove him back. Blood mingled with ink and Mears screamed once in pain and fear.

Before Mears had a chance to recover the little man was after him like a terrier at the throat of a mastiff. Completely unaware of what he was doing, Mr. Wilson brought the heavy metal stand up again.

This time it landed against the big man's temple with a dull, deadly sound and Mears dropped like a sledged steer. There was a moment's silence during which the realization of what he had done came to Mr. Wilson.

Frantic with fresh fear and guilt, Mr. Wilson acted instinctively. The drawer was half open and the little man dipped his hand into it and withdrew his precious papers. Like a man with the devil after him he dashed from the room.

The thing had been done in less than a minute. As Mr. Wilson scurried toward the stairs he heard doors behind him swing open. Voices shouted. There came a woman's scream.

Two women opened the building door just as Mr. Wilson got there. He rushed rudely past them. For once in his life he forgot to excuse himself.

HE HAD gone but a short distance when his sight began to clear.

Fortunately he was heading in the right direction and he continued that way. With his heart pounding and his dry breath burning his throat he ran until he saw the towers of the I. C. station.

Mr. Wilson clambered, rather than ran, up the stairs of his boarding house. The door was left open behind him as he panted toward his room. Inside, he fell onto his bed, exhausted.

After what seemed an age his breathing became more normal and he sat up. Reaching for something familiar he hauled out his watch and looked at it with barely seeing eyes.

It was fifteen minutes past one. He put the watch back in his pocket and as he did so Mr. Wilson noticed the ink splotch on his hand.

Automatically, he poured fresh water and carefully washed his hands. The telltale smudge vanished. Mr. Wilson looked at himself in the mirror.

Just one hour ago he had been a kindly little man, loved and respected by everyone! Now all men's hands were raised against him. Never more would he see the ivy covered school building; never more would youths taller than he listen respectfully as he spoke of atomic weights and valences.

Murderer! Almost visible to Mr. Wilson was the scarlet sign of his evil deed. A cold sweat broke out on his brow and he trembled. He tottered back and fell again onto the bed.

He heard Mrs. Grady's strong voice calling him. He could not answer. Her voice grew louder and became anxious. There were heavy footsteps that stopped outside his door.

The police! But it was not the police who came in. It was Mrs. Grady, her face red and her eyes worried.

"Mr. Wilson!" the good woman gasped. "Mr. Wilson! Whatever is the matter?"

He had not the strength to reply. For

a moment she watched him tremble and then her voice became brisk. "Why, it's sick you are!"

With motherly tenderness she removed his clothes and tucked the unresisting Mr. Wilson into bed. From somewhere she brought a thick quilt and covered him. After she had put a hot water bottle next to him she called the doctor.

THE doctor came at once. He was a tall, thin man with a deep voice. He took Mr. Wilson's pulse, his temperature, and listened to his wild heartbeats. Mrs. Grady hovered over them.

Until now Mr. Wilson had been silent. Now he began to moan. "How could I do it?" he said. "Why did I ever do it? I should have left it. I should have left it."

The doctor nodded understandingly. "Just as I thought. He ate something that upset his stomach. Now the poor man is frightened."

He leaned over Mr. Wilson. "There, there. Nothing to worry about. You'll soon be all right. Not a thing wrong with you that a little warmth and rest won't cure."

Mrs. Grady shook her head with mixed relief and anger. "The likes of him to be meandering about the city with no one to look after him. And those filthy restaurants that would be poisoning the dear soul!"

"I'm sure he hasn't been poisoned," the doctor told her. "Just keep him warm and I'll be back in two hours to make sure he's all right."

Mr. Wilson was thankful that Mrs. Grady did not leave with the doctor. The little man could not bear to be alone with his conscience.

Mrs. Grady tended him like a sick infant. She wiped the perspiration from his brow, kept the quilt tight about him and called the maid and told her

to bring a pitcher of hot tea. Then she poured the boiling liquid into Mr. Wilson until she felt his insides were scalded clean. After that she just sat and worried over him.

The ringing of the doorbell brought on a fresh fit of trembling. The ringing stopped and became an insistent pounding. To Mr. Wilson it was the knell of doom and his teeth chattered wildly.

This time he was right; it was the police. Three big men with relentless and merciless eyes stalked into the room accompanied by the two women Mr. Wilson had passed at the door of Mr. Mears' buliding.

Mrs. Grady recognized one of the men. "And what will you be wanting here, Keogh?" she demanded.

He disregarded her question. Looking down at the cowering little man in the bed the detective barked, "Your name Wilson?"

Mr. Wilson tried to reply and couldn't. Mrs. Grady answered for him.

"Mr. Wilson it is," she snorted. "And what is it you want of the poor sick man?"

"He's going to be a lot sicker," Keogh told her. "He's wanted for murder!" He turned to the two women. "He the one?" The women nodded.

The detective reached down to seize Mr. Wilson's shoulder and Mrs. Grady knocked his hand away.

"It's drunk or daft you are!" she snapped at the startled Keogh. "Why, even a fool can see the dear man wouldn't hurt a fly!"

SHE stood between Mr. Wilson and the others with her thick arms ready for action and her heavy jaw outthrust. Keogh decided diplomacy was safer than direct action and tried to explain.

"Maybe he wouldn't hurt a fly but

he killed a man all right, a lawyer named Mears. People heard Mears scream and they saw this man here running down the hall. These two ladies saw Wilson as he ran out the downstairs door."

He turned again to the two women. "You're sure he's the one you saw?" They nodded.

"Not a word of it do I believe!" Mrs. Grady stated.

"Now look here," Keogh told her, "it doesn't matter if you believe it or not! Mears was found with the blood still running from him. The inkstand that brained him was right there on the floor. It was covered with ink so we couldn't get any prints but we got plenty of witnesses.

"Now then. We looked around until we found the dead man's appointment book and we also found that Mr. Wilson had an appointment with him for twelve-thirty, which is exactly the time the murder took place."

He glowered at Mrs. Grady. "Now get out of my way or I'll run you in for interfering with an officer!"

Mrs. Grady stayed where she was. "Now I know you're daft!" she declared. "Twelve-thirty, was it? And what will you be saying after I tell you that at that time Mr. Wilson was right here in this room? And sick in bed, too!"

"I'd say you were . . . mistaken," Keogh said grimly.

"Now am I?" Mrs. Grady derided him. "And deaf and blind too, I suppose? Well, I say that he was right here at twelve-thirty!"

Mr. Wilson's heart stopped pounding as he realized what Mrs. Grady had said. His teeth stopped their clicking and he made an effort to sit up. No one paid any attention to him as he tried to dissuade Mrs. Grady from her attempt to alibi him.

"What makes you so sure of the time?" Keogh was demanding of the landlady.

"Because at exactly noon Mr. Wilson came into the house with me when my radio program went on," she explained. "I listened to it until twelve-thirty when it ended. Mr. Wilson went to his room.

"After the program was over I went into the hall and found the door open. Thinking the dear man had gone out I called him and went out to the porch. He wasn't there, but whilst I was out I looked up at the I. C. clock like I always do."

Mrs. Grady leaned closer to Keogh. "And don't be telling me that clock is wrong!"

Just then a deep voice boomed from the hall. "What is going on here?" it asked.

The doctor pushed his way into the room and tried to see past Mrs. Grady. "What's happened to Mr. Wilson?" he asked her.

Instead of answering she said, "What time was it when you were here before, doctor?"

He stared at her in bewilderment. "Why, let me see. . . . It was ten minutes to one when I returned to my office and I must have spent fifteen minutes here. I should say, then, that I got here at approximately twelve-thirty."

HE THOUGHT that over and found a corroborating circumstance. "That must be about right. I had just finished my lunch when your call came."

"Well?" Mrs. Grady demanded of the detective.

Keogh glared at the doctor. "Is that man in the bed the same one you saw before?"

The doctor looked down at Mr. Wilson. "It is."

Keogh bit his lip and stared at his crestfallen witnesses. "Women!" he snarled. He led his cohorts from the room.

Mr. Wilson fell back weakly. "I can't believe it," he muttered. "I simply cannot believe it."

"Of course you can't," Mrs. Grady said sympathetically. "Imagine that big shanty Irishman accusing a harmless man like you of such a terrible thing!"

Her face blanched. "And to think what they would have done to you if they had taken you in! A good thing it is that the doctor and I were here to prove you couldn't have had anything to do with it!"

Mr. Wilson said, "Oh dear, oh dear me." He shook his head. "Mrs. Grady, would you be so good as to hand me my vest?"

She gave him the vest and he pulled out his watch. It showed the hour to be twenty minutes before four. He

looked at Mrs. Grady.

"Please tell me the exact time, "Mr. Wilson begged her.

She left the room and her heavy tread went down the hall. The door opened and after a pause closed again and she came back to his room.

"The I.C. clock says twenty minutes to three," Mrs. Grady told him cheerfully. She watched his shaking fingers set his watch back an hour.

For the first time Mr. Wilson realized what had happened. From somewhere he had been given an extra hour which did not exist to anyone else!

"And now," she waved a thick finger at him as at a naughty child, "you'll better be forgetting all about time and watches for a while."

Mr. Wilson couldn't quite forget. But his watch never gained another hour and after a time it seemed to him that the whole thing must have been a bad dream.

THE END

★ LITTLE BOY IN BRONZE ★

A FATHER'S whim, and a little lost boy were the ingredients that went into the making of Brussel's first citizen, the Manneken. The story of how the Manneken, a charming bronze statue, came to occupy the place in the center of the city, is as fantastic as a fairy tale, and equally enchanting.

In 1648, the Manneken, then a real boy, was the son of a prominent Brussels' citizen, and very much the apple of his father's eye. One day, the boy wandered off and disappeared. Utterly distracted, the father promised the authorities that if they would find his boy, he would present to the city a bronze statue. His only stipulation was that the statue must represent the boy in whatever pose he was found. Eventually the boy was found, but to every one's amusement, the little fellow was caught in the act of using the gutter as a drain. The father kept his word, though, and the Manneken Fountain was erected, becoming the most beloved treasure of the people of Brussels.

To this day, the statue remains the first citizen of Brussels. It has an extensive wardrobe all its own which is kept in trim by a specially appointed Master of the Manneken's Wardrobe, an official on the city payroll. On different occasions, the Man-

neken has appeared as an American Boy Scout, a Japanese warrior, and a courtier of Louis XV in a uniform actually given him by the King. He has adapted his costume to suit the rulers of his small country through the centuries. When the French reigned, he wore the tricolor. When the House of Orange was on the throne, he wore the orange colors of that court.

Though he could not keep his country from invasion in 1914, he could keep up their morale. At the close of the war he was given the rank of corporal and cited for bravery. The citation read:

"Surprised at his post in August, 1914, by the sudden invasion of the enemy, he received them with the utmost sang-froid, showing by his gesture his complete heedlessness of danger. Proud of his past and conscious of the necessity which his title of Oldest Citizen of Brussels placed upon him of giving an example to his fellow citizens, he maintained his position for more than four years without faltering.

As modest in triumph as he was strong in adversity he remains today a model corporal, strict and faithful in his performance of duty."

—Robert P. Melton.

SCIENTIFIC



It is significant to note that the American Apache Indian is of the Totem Of The Wolf. The Apache are the prize fighting men among warlike Indians, and all had reason to fear them. Was it because they belonged to the Wolf Totem tribes? Can the Apache Indians have any real relation to the fighting Egyptians who are also of the Wolf Totem? Perhaps right here in America exists one of the significant anthropology clues



The American Indian legends of the Twins, the Elder, the Wind deity and the Younger Wolf spill over into the legends of Egypt in a very strange manner. There is a positive relationship which cannot be denied, and which positively indicates their common origin



The Dene people were apparently the last language to cross the Alautians from Asia. Their tongue is so homogenous that it may have come as late as fifteen hundred years ago. In spite of this, their relationship to the early Dragon is most unmistakable



The volcano-worshipping religion might have been spread by lava outpourings on the coast. Or it is true that the legend of the Coyote who stole the sacred fire is the real basis for such worship. If so, we have a new link with the past

MYSTERIES

THE TOTEM OF THE WOLF

By L. TAYLOR HANSEN

What is the answer to this totem's widespread distribution in both hemispheres of the earth?

THE often indifferent, sometimes scornful, Apaches, among the war-like American Indian the prize fighting men¹ are of The Totem of The Wolf. Like their cousins, The Navaho, whose language is still comprehensible, these Dene people are worshippers of several totems, showing a strong and ancient intermixture. Yet the Amen-figure of The Dragon, though prominent, is, like The Fish, subservient to powerful, and mystic Coyote-Man. The Dene have often been accused of slavishly copying other rites, but this trilogy of culture comes all the way down with them from the far north.

The only seeming explanation is that The Dragon had already drenched the north with his culture to the Aleutian Bridge, and perhaps beyond, when The Wolf crossed over from Asia. These are the two totems in this trilogy the most easily accounted for, while that of The Great Fish, apparently already having yielded to the later Dragon, was to be found, at the time of the passage of The Wolf, spasmodically suggested by island groups and therefore, only spasmodically absorbed.

It is a most suggestive fact that not only in languages, but also in totems, the eastern part of the United States is more homogeneous than the Pacific Coast. In the Eastern part of the country, we are dealing primarily with the Atlantic totems, while on the Pacific Coast, we find ourselves entangled not only with the large Pacific totems, but also with partly absorbed or submerged Atlantic totems. This should help to demonstrate

¹ The Apaches, never numerous, produced two outstanding military geniuses—Cochise and Geronimo. The first resisted an act of stupid treachery by many years of successful warfare. He finally made peace as a victor and chose the location of his peoples reservation. The latter, his nephew, resented the removal of his people to a lesser reservation despite treaty stipulations. With less than thirty warriors, often less than twenty, burdened by women and children, and outnumbered from three hundred to a thousand to one, they successfully defied both the armies of Mexico and the United States for over a decade until taken by treachery and shipped away from their native Arizona.

that the latest incursions into the cultural pattern have come from the South-east, since it underscores the language map.

The origin legend of The Klamath River Indians is typical of such cross-currents. They will tell you that Ed-weech-me came west where he found that The Bear, (The Pomo Tribe?) was ruling the land. The Bear thought that all he had to do was to look through his fingers at anyone and that person immediately died. (This being a ritualistic gesture of the sun dance, it should identify The Bear as Algonkin, if indeed, Decoodah had not already done so, and therefore underscores his identity.)

At that time, say the Klamaths, the sons of The Bear were The Snakes, Two Eagles, and The Great Fish. Apparently then, The Bear had conquered and was ruling over these minor fragments of former peoples, when Ed-weech-me, definitely another name for The Elder Twin or The Wind-god, came into the land. The latter hero defeated the minor peoples thus reducing The Bear to impotence.

From this legend it appears that the Algonkins came west in two waves, the second wave of which included the Klamaths. Yet from another legend we gain a still further glimpse into the past. The Shastas tell us that they once drove from the vicinity of that snowy peak a people who worshipped it as the home of The Deity where dwelt their Sacred-fire. As we recognize again the Great Dragon, the Shastas tell us further that these people had great square communal houses in which they held their dances, and once more we recognize the architecture of the Caribbean. To this story, the Modocs add that once Fire-god hid himself in Mt. Shasta because a great wind hit the land and he was afraid. He sent his daughter out to ask the wind to go away but she disobeyed his orders in some minor way and fell into the hands of The Bear as a prisoner. This should identify The Bear as either the army of The Wind, or an ally. In any case, The Bear was opposed to the Dragon who shut himself up in his mountain fort.

A few facts seem to identify the role which The Wolf, or Coyote-Man played in this Dragon struggle. In the first place, nearly all of the legends give Coyote the credit for stealing the fire.

He usually has allies, it is true, but he is the main actor.

THE Popul Vuh which is such a plain story of the overthrow of the Votanic Empire, that it would seem the main last act of the drama took place in Central America, has a most curious sequel in Central California. Among The Southern Sierra Miwok, Barrett has listed a legendary fragment which sounds like an echo of the Popul Vuh. The main drama in which the battle between the hero Yayil and the ruler of a kingdom by the Southern Sea took place after the Great World Fire in which Falcon (evidently their totem) and his ally Coyote escaped the conflagration, along with Condor, like the famous hook, was at the capital city of this Southern Kingdom. The rulers also played a game and the hero was defeated and then hurned in their great fire. Then like the Popul Vuh, the son returned for a belated revenge. As in the Popul Vuh, Owl had a prominent part as an ally of the Southern Power, and as in that hook, the hero's son (Falcon to the Miwok, in the P.V. it was twin sons) and his great friend, play the game once more and win. The rulers of the Southern Power are then burned in their own Great-fire. In connection with this legend, it is interesting that Yehl among the Thlinkets is The Raven, and his home is in the East-wind, but he divides his power with The Wolf. The Thlinkets dwell far up toward the Aleutian Bridge.

When the legends of the Apaches are studied, they should go a long way to clearing up obscure corners of this history² for apparently Coyoteman was one of the main characters of the Dragon War, as the Navahoes say, and it was due to "The Twins,"³ of whom Coyote, or Wolf is The Younger, that the "Great Monsters who were devouring mankind," undoubtedly The Dragon, were finally defeated. More would be known of this early struggle if all tribes were studied as to their reverence for or abhorrence for twins,

² Apache mythology is almost an unknown territory to science.

³ The author has discovered in personal contacts, that the tribes revering twins, are the ones who are most impressed by the Egyptian temple paintings, while the Pueblos are the best authorities upon the subject of costume. In order to receive a reaction of any kind one must have a man thoroughly grounded in the lore of his tribe. Yet the Mayan and Quichua are as fascinated by the Egyptian likenesses as the Algonkin. Sedillo, the rebellious Yaqui chief recently killed, was responsible for starting the present writer upon these investigations. He had studied these similarities in Egypt and among the Mayans back in the forest where the old priesthood still exists. It is one of the greatest of potential losses that this brilliant man should have thrown away years of unrecorded study, when he became involved in political intrigue and was killed in 1936.

and this trait taken into consideration in the later study of their pantheons. Thus we would finally discover the lost Dragon fragments that were cut off from the Southern heart of the colossus by their Northern enemies.

Of one thing we are certain, that this struggle took place long before the rise of the Aztecs. Although they think of Ueuetotl (or Hua hua teotl) the "old, old god" as the original fire god, they worship particularly Tezcatlipoca who is a decided amalgamation of the Wolf with the mirror-holding sun cult of the Early Mississippi. And this in spite of the fact that their language connects them with the Nicaraos of Central America who, like the Aztecs, cremated their warrior-caste in the Sacred-fire.

This war probably also took place long before the rise of The Great Reformer, for its western echoes show that it occurred as long ago in the west as it seems to have taken place in Central America.

One of the strangest things about the legend of The Twins, The Elder, Wind deity, and the Younger Wolf, is the manner in which they spill over into Egypt. A Muskogean friend of the author, seeing a reproduction of the Egyptian temple painting in which Osiris is giving the howl of life to the Pharaoh, while Set stands behind them, inquired with great interest as to the direction and origin of "the tribe who painted that legend." Later, it became a game to take an Indian to where the print could be casually passed in an album of Mayan and other temple paintings and watch the manner in which they always lingered over it. Most of them agree that Set's costume is entirely correct, though they do not recognize his Egyptian name. Yet they exclaim that his correct color is black, though whether he originated it, or whether the Turtle did, is a matter of debate. Furthermore they all identify Osiris as "The Elder Brother" or the "Breath-Master" though they insist the name should be pronounced O-see-rees in order to have the hissing sound and the ee-ee repetition.

What is the meaning behind the universality of this totem? Does it go back to pre-dynastic Egypt, to the very earliest vase ever to be dug from Egyptian territory, in which the pictured figures indulging in a hunt or a hunting dance wear a fox skin attached to their belts in exactly the same manner in which the Pueblos attach it today? Perhaps we shall never know.

FOR all the antiquity of their totem, however the Dene people were apparently the last language to cross the Aleutians from Asia, carrying a tongue so homogeneous today that it may have come as late as fifteen hundred years ago. Yet in spite of the fact that the many tribes of the Dene or Tenneh cling to this name for themselves, and all are imbued with a great reverence for Coyote-man, yet no group, save those who speak the Uto-Aztecan tongue and those found upon the shores of the Caribbean, bear such a clear

imprint of contact with the early culture of The Dragon.

The reason for this is that apparently once the land which today belongs to The Dene people of The Wolf was formerly wrested from The Dragon. The names of the mountains and other features of the land right up to the Aleutians, and apparently beyond are definitely Dragon names. Thus we have the tribal names taken from these natural features among the peoples speaking the Dene or the Athapaskan tongue, of "Ahtena," "Kaiyub-kho-tama," "Unak-ho-tana," "Nabes-natana" as well as "Tanaina" and "Tanana" from the Upper and Lower Tanana, to mention a few. If one will trace the names of mountains into Asia, one will see that it did not stop at the Aleutians—this ancient power of the Sacred-fire to whom volcanoes are objects of worship.⁴

We cannot be certain which way the Dragon went. We can only be sure that the passage was previous to The Wolf, and that the conquered population was imbued deeply enough to influence the incoming wave. It is by the means of names that today we can trace the Gaels within what is English territory, and the Arymaras of South America within what was Quichua dominion when the Spanish first set foot upon the land.

Yet none of these names which The Dene carry is as antique and as suggestive of the Egyptian Amen as the name for the Apache fire-god who carries in his dances—a flaming trident. His name which is strictly taboo to mention is—Tamena. Such a startling bridge between the Egyptian Amen and the Mayan Zama makes one wonder if the early Itzae name might have been Zama or a contraction of "Itzae-Amen?"

Of course, the volcano-worshipping religion might have been spread by lava outpourings upon the coast, some of which are less than five hundred years old.⁵ The skeleton of a man as well as moccasins and a tepee abandoned in the hall of ashes from Crater Lake when it was an active volcano have been found. The lost villages of the Chumash may or may not have been older than this. Lavas are rather hard to date except by tree-growth.

Upon these old patterns came Coyote-Man, The Younger Twin, the Mischievous One, and taking the lesser animals for his allies, as well as the disinherited Wind-god, or The Elder Twin, he successfully slew the Great Earth Monster in a

struggle which lasted for generations and which dyed the earth of the Western lands with blood. Then for his smaller allies, who had long been denied the privilege of having it, Coyote stole the Sacred-fire.

Today the scornful Apaches who stare at the stranger through half-shut eyes, are only allowed two dances a year by our government. One of these they have chosen to celebrate the coming-of-age for their young women. The other one is the weird "Devil-Dance." Yet as the student of Amerind lore watches the five exotic figures sway with their flaming tridents, and realizes that he is looking upon the henchmen of "Tamena," he cannot help but wonder if the Apaches chose this dance as the other one, because millenniums ago, possibly before the dawn of our history, they defeated the world colossus of The Dragon?

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⁴ Particularly along the Medicine Lake rift, and its volcanoes.

⁵ Dr. Lawrence, U. of C. geologist secured a skeleton which had been discovered in 1924, covered with the lava of Crater Lake when it bore the Indian name of Mazamah and was a volcano. Later Dr. L. H. Cressman, Anthropologist and Dr. Warren D. Smith, geologist both of Univ. of Oregon were called to Tuckers Flounce Rock Ranch, thirty-four miles from Medford by the discovery of a skeleton seated in a lava cave of only 36 inches in diameter. This find was near the site of the first discovery. Lee Vye Walker of Klamath Falls has in his possession moccasins and part of a tent retrieved from under a lava flow where they had been smothered in pumice. These were found in the same vicinity.

FLASH STERILIZATION KEEPS CREAM FRESH

CREAM which is sterilized by a new process called "flash sterilization" will keep fresh for a year at room temperature. After flash sterilization at a temperature of about 270 degrees Fahrenheit, the cream is bottled and sealed in an electrically cleaned room. Air in the bottling room is cleaned and ultraviolet ray lamps kill all germs in the atmosphere. The actual sterilizing process requires only four minutes to kill all bacteria, compared with 30 for standard pasteurization.

USE OF HELIUM IN PLANE TIRES

HELIUM, the noninflammable gas used for years to inflate blimps and dirigibles, may be used to lighten heavier than air flying craft.

Technicians have perfected a method of inflating the big tires on bombers and commercial planes with the gas, reducing plane weight and automatically increasing range.

It is said that 92 pounds of air are required to inflate a 110-inch tire—but 13 pounds of helium will do the same job.—Calvin Johnson.

Vignettes OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

Sir William Henry Perkin

He was the English scientist who discovered aniline dyes after forsaking architecture for chemistry

SIR WILLIAM HENRY PERKIN, English chemist, the discoverer of aniline dyes was born in London on March 12, 1838. His father, a contractor and builder of standing, was in comfortable circumstances and wanted his son to become an architect. With this end in view the boy was given as good an education in the fundamentals as could be procured, and was apparently quite willing to follow along the lines that had been chosen for him. But at the age of fourteen he witnessed at the home of a schoolmate some experiments in chemistry, and became so fascinated that he decided then and there to take up that science as a profession. At the time he was a student at the College of the City of London. Chemistry just then did not rank very highly as an art, nor present many opportunities for the earning of a living. But Perkin's teacher happened to be an enthusiast and noting the deep interest he took in his lectures he made him his assistant, and later advised him to attend those of Faraday at the Royal College, who was then at the summit of his career.

After listening once to the course he attended it a second time, and by earnest pleadings induced his father to abandon the intention of making him an architect, and to back him for a full course at the Royal institution. In two years he had become so proficient in the art that he was made an assistant to the chief professor, A. W. von Hofmann. At home he set up a laboratory in an unused room where he devoted his evenings and vacations to private investigations. He was inspired by some remarks of Hofmann's to undertake the artificial production of quinine. There, in the Easter holidays of 1856 he made his first great discovery.

As his chief had suggested to him as a vacation study, an attempt to produce synthetically from coal tar the drug quinine, which was then in great demand at a very high price, he set to work on this. He did not succeed in accomplishing it; but instead, and more by accident than design, he made the first of the aniline colors, that lovely

and highly prized reddish-purple dye now known as "mauve," but which at first went by the name of Perkin's Purple. In the course of his experiments he oxidized impure aniline with potassium bichromate, and obtained a black product from which he was able to extract a bluish substance with excellent dyeing properties. As soon as he had produced enough of the "Aniline purple" for a practical test, he submitted it for trial to one of the large establishments in England engaged in the dyeing business. They reported favorably on it, and in the strongest terms.

PERKIN'S next step was to procure his patent and after that, the means to begin its manufacture. Here he encountered innumerable difficulties. Capital was not eager to back a new and unproved industry. But his father and an elder brother had by this time become so fully convinced of the importance of his discovery, that they joined all their available resources, and under the firm name of Perkin & Sons began the erection of the building in 1857 at the village of Greenford Green, near Harrow. Here young Perkin designed and installed the machinery of the plant, and after securing a supply of the raw material required from the gas works at Glasgow, and the nitric and sulphuric acids and hydrogen to extract the aniline from the coal tar, was able to begin the production of the former in quantity, and from it to extract the coveted dye. In this way the great aniline dye industry, which has assumed such large proportions, was founded.

Perkin also had an important share in the development of artificial alizarin which has now entirely replaced the red dye of the matter root. C. Graebe and C. T. Liebermann in 1868 prepared the substance synthetically from anthracene, but their process was not practicable on a large scale. Soon afterwards Perkin patented a commercial process which secured for his Greenford Green works a monopoly of alizarin manufacture for several years. He also carried out investigations on other dyes and on flavouring materials, in the

course of which he synthesized coumarine the odoriferous principle of woodruff and the tonka bean.

When dye was first used with cotton goods it was found necessary to discover a new mordant, to render it "fast." Among those tried out tannin was found the most satisfactory, and Perkin was the first to employ it for that purpose. He also introduced the practice of using a soap bath in the treatment of silk fabrics. In the early stages of the enterprise dyers were chary of adopting this new laboratory product as a substitute for the vegetable and animal dyes that from ancient times had been their reliance, but their hesitation was finally overcome. The business became a great financial success, particularly after Perkin in his laboratory, and then in his factory, began the production of other colors.

In a short time factories using the Perkin patents sprang up in various parts of Great Britain and on the continent, and the young chemist became recognized as the leading authority on dyes. In 1861, when only twenty-three years old, he was invited by the Chemical Society of London to deliver a lecture on his specialty. In the audience he had the unusual satisfaction of seeing his former preceptor, the distinguished chemist Faraday who, at its termination, warmly congratulated him on his work.

IN 1866 Perkin was elected a fellow of the Royal Society. In 1874 he sold his plants and his patents, and retired from active business to enjoy the delights of a life of chemical research, and with ample means to satisfy the inclination.

In 1878 he discovered the "Perkin reaction," for the preparation of unsaturated acids, e.g., cinnamic acid which depends on the condensation of aromatic aldehydes with the salt of a fatty acid. Later he made a comprehensive study of the relation between chemical constitution and the rotation of the plane of polarization of light in a magnetic field and calculated the "magnetic rotatory power" of various elements and radicles. In 1879, in recognition of these important new discoveries, he was awarded the medal of the Royal Society, and ten years later the Davy medal. He also received many other English and foreign honors. He was knighted in 1906. That year, being the fiftieth anniversary of his discovery of mauve, he was honored in various ways by chemical societies all over the world. In America he was presented with the first impress of the Perkin medal, founded in his honor, and since awarded annually for distinguished service in the field of applied chemistry. Perkin died at Harrow on July 14, 1907.

Unfortunately, on account of the indifference of the British government, and of the great English universities, to progress in applied science, which was ranked as a trade, and consequently somewhat beneath the dignity of gentlemen, the command of the dyestuff industry passed away from that country after the death of its founder, and was transferred to the control of Germany, where it expanded so enormously that, at the opening of the 1st World War the world was dependent on that country not only for its dyes, but for a long list of synthetic products the manufacture of which had sprung from the original impulse of Perkin's discovery and labor.

★ CHECKING AIR-BORNE DISEASES ★

By A. MORRIS

DOCTORS have won a smashing victory over the respiratory diseases which are caused by air-borne germs, such as, severe colds, tonsillitis, measles, scarlet fever, pneumonia and rheumatic fever. In barracks and on ships, men lived in such close association that these diseases spread like wildfire. And wherever the high rate of respiratory infections prevailed, doctors noticed a sharp rise in rheumatic fever, which has long been recognized as one of the major public health problems of the United States. Seeming to be only a bad cold, then followed by fever, pain, swelling of the joints, and finally attacking the heart valves. It is often fatal.

Stamping out these youth-killers was a tricky problem for the cause and cure of rheumatic fever are still unknown.

It has been found that more than half the respiratory diseases are associated with the miracle which causes the familiar "strep throat," and that rheumatic fever always reaches epidemic propor-

tions following an outbreak of strep infections. The next step was to knock out the strep microbe.

The most effective weapon to turn to was sulfadiazine, one of the newest of the sulfa drugs. While a majority of patients can take sulfa drugs with little or no ill effect when properly administered, some individuals suffer severe reactions.

By administering extremely small doses of sulfa general respiratory diseases were reduced. But the sulfa drugs have not been the only weapons with which the doctors have waged successful war against the air-borne microbes. The development of the glycol spray which, although harmless and odorless to humans, is probably the most effective microbe trap yet devised.

Recently a plane sprayed the city of Rockford, Illinois with DDT in order to curb the infantile paralysis epidemic.

Some of the lessons successfully practiced by the Armed Services will be made available now for public use which will help wipe out disease.

THE CHEOPS PYRAMID; ITS CONSTRUCTION



By C. F. J. HIESTAND



FOR uncounted ages speculation has been rampant, voluminous, and ingenious concerning the age of this great structure, the identity of its builders, and the means of construction used.

The age question alone has been a bone of contention with Egyptologists since Herodotus, the great Greek historian, first saw the structure in 445 B.C., and was told at that time by the Egyptians that the Pyramid already was "very ancient." Since Herodotus' time many scholars have proclaimed their individual guesses—estimates which range from 2100 B.C. (Proctor) to 20,000 years, i.e., 21,946 B.C. (Bunsen). A point fairly well agreed upon by Pyramid students is that the Descending Passage pointed at the star considered the "Pole Star" when the structure was being built. That star was not the "Polaris" of today, it was Alpha Draconis. Many investigations substantiate this and the words of Proctor that "Draconis can look into the Descending Passage only once in a sidereal year" thereby become very significant. This is one of the reasons for Bunsen's estimate—it is obvious that counting backward from any given date, a time one sidereal year (25,827 yrs.) anterior must be imputed. There is one important fact however that is usually overlooked by investigators: at Dendera, Egypt, there are two large Zodiacs that yield incontrovertible evidence that "time records" have been kept in Egypt for at least $3\frac{1}{2}$ sidereal years (90,396 $\frac{1}{4}$ yrs.).

Popular belief attributes the Great Pyramid to the IVth Dynasty (2800 B.C.) and holds it was built as a tomb for the ruler Cheops (Khufu). This idea is completely erroneous, for archeologists have definitely proved the structure was never used for such purpose and, in fact, never held any relics of any kind of any ruler. When Herodotus visited Egypt in 445 B.C. he definitely established the Great Pyramid never contained anything resembling burial remains. During his trip he not only attempted to fix the age of the structure but also tried to ascertain the name of the builder. His writings report his conversation with a native Egyptian named Manetbo, a Hierophant and scholar, who claimed "the Cheops Pyramid was not built by Egyptians" but rather by "a race of people that came from the East." These same people have also been termed "Eastern Ethiopians" and "The Shepherd Kings." Though the veil of time shrouds the definite identity of the builder group it may be reasonably supposed that

these people were descendants of the Atlantean peoples and were migrating to avoid eradication resulting from the inundation of their islands. If this Atlantean people built the Great Pyramid we can catch a glimpse of the scientific development possessed by the Atlantean civilization! Some of the dimensions of the Great Pyramid are: length of sides 760'11"; perimeter of base 3043', nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ mile; the altitude is 484'5"; cubic content is approximately 90 million cubic feet of stone; the gross weight is calculated to be about 5.25 billion tons. This truly imposing building stood unchallenged as the world's greatest single construction effort until the erection of Boulder Dam. The altitude of the building is roughly that of a 40-floor skyscraper—a difficult erection problem today and what a greater task it must have been considering the antiquity of the edifice. Using 2800 B.C. as the date of construction we realize the great pile has been resisting the onslaughts of the elements for nearly 4800 years. Resisting the effects of the blazing desert sun and sand storms is no easy task alone and, in addition, other factors such as earthquakes, tornadoes, etc., have made little if any change in the structure. Today after almost 48 centuries the building stands in almost its pristine state—the only difference being the absence of the external sheathing, or arriis, which was removed and used by the later "Egyptians" for building material and as a source of lime. The Great Pyramid, of course, is only one of a group of 38 similar structures located west of the Nile on the plateau of Gizeh a few miles from Cairo. Early in history it was found necessary to differentiate the greatest pyramid from the remaining 37 and so it was called the "Great" pyramid. Later it was called the "Cheops" pyramid because the royal signet of that ruler was found on some of the stones. Only in the early history of the world was it believed that all the pyramids were constructed by the same builders. Comparison of the Great Pyramid and the lesser structures enables one to understand who built the lesser ones as it is easily noticed there are great differences in workmanship, material, and size. The lesser pyramids were constructed by the Egyptians and, considering the state of ruin they are in today as compared with the excellent preservation of the Cheops structure and, in addition, recalling that the "later" Egyptians "vandalized" the Great Building, we are forced to conclude the statements about Egypt's "glorious civilization"

(Continued on page 162)

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry, Industrial | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Patternmaking—Wood, Metal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry, Mfg. Iron & Steel | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Shop Blueprints |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> Pulp and Paper Making | <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting Technician | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet-Metal Worker |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Good English <input type="checkbox"/> High School | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineering <input type="checkbox"/> Coal Mining | <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Technician <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Brake <input type="checkbox"/> Car Inspector |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Mathematics | <input type="checkbox"/> Contracting and Building | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel-Electrician | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Locomotive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrating <input type="checkbox"/> Motor Traffic | <input type="checkbox"/> Highway Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Engines <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engines | <input type="checkbox"/> Locomotive Engineer |
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THE CHEOPS PYRAMID; ITS CONSTRUCTION

(Continued from page 160)

and "knowledge of the sciences" are actually sheer fabrication. The Egyptians built the lesser structures in futile attempts to duplicate the Great one, which was used as a model; the great structure was erected by a people anterior to the Egyptians.

AS MUCH disparity and vagueness exists in hypotheses advanced concerning the erection of the Great Pyramid as exist in the ideas about its age. The widely-held belief that slave labor was used in the erection of the Cheops pyramid is perhaps the most illogical and unreasonable. Slave labor, contrary to popular belief, is not cheap (as Hitler perhaps now realizes)—slaves or any other animal must be fed and, when one considers the number of slaves reported used in the undertaking, the food item in the financial sense alone, ignoring the logistics of the food, is simply staggering. One investigator claims "100,000 men worked for 10 years" to erect the Pyramid. On the basis of one pound of food per man per day the food required is roughly 182,000 tons. The foodstuffs would have been brought from Cairo necessarily, 10 miles away, and such constant "catering" would have necessitated a great supply and transport organization. Even if the total work force had been divided into three shifts of 33,000 each the supply problem would still be tremendous—as any large scale employer will agree! No mention is made by authorities that such an amount of foodstuffs was sent from Cairo in those days so apparently no such horde of men was at work. The belief that the "slaves were worked until they dropped and were then buried" is negated on two points: No human osseous remains in large quantity have ever been found in the vicinity of the Pyramid, and "burial details" would have only augmented an already enormous problem and, therefore, would not have been considered.

The logistics objection to the slave labor idea also refutes the contention that animal labor was used and such an idea is further complicated by the fact that any draft animal, ox, etc., consumes considerably more than one pound of fodder per day—which would have required an even larger supply system. Self sustaining labor, either human or animal, is inconceivable in the vicinity of the Pyramid as the area is barren and such labor could not forage for food.

The traditional picture that rises in the mind when considering the erection of the great structure is one wherein is seen great numbers of slaves moving the huge stone blocks across the sands by means of rollers or on carts. The slaves of course are yoked to the platform or cart carrying

the stone and by mere use of muscular effort are effecting the movement of the stone. A characteristic shared in common by both sand and "quicksand" is that the harder one presses against them the deeper one sinks. Both these materials will support the body's weight, despite the erroneous belief that one "sinks" in quicksand, as long as the body remains quiet. It is only movement resulting from fright that causes the "sinking" in quicksand. Quicksand supports the body without difficulty as the mean specific gravity of the human body is about 0.9, well within the "supporting range" of this "treacherous" material. Only when the limbs are moved and the legs are forcibly kicked in an effort to keep above the surface is there a tendency to sink—actually less sinking than the "kicking away" of a support beneath the feet. Sand is in the same category—and the harder the slaves exerted themselves the deeper into the sand they would have been forced!

The extremely fatiguing nature of such poor application of muscle energy would have made the average shift less than two hours; this time of course is further greatly reduced when it is remembered the labor, if performed, was in direct sunlight in an area where the temperature of 130° F. in the shade is not uncommon! The roller idea is not tenable as the only available material in the vicinity from which rollers could have been made is palm trunks—which is both soft and friable! Additionally, the supply is extremely limited as the location of the Pyramid is an almost barren plateau—and probably has been for uncounted centuries! The cart idea is even less reasonable than that of the rollers. The greatest stone found in the Pyramid to date weighs about 70 tons. The width of tread required to keep the wheels of the cart from sinking into the soft and shifting sands would have been immense; a yard wide, possibly more. Certainly no narrow wheeled cart could have traversed the area, which is difficult merely to walk across; a roadway of sufficient strength would still be traceable, but no mention is made of a roadway having been constructed. In the same category with the cart idea is the "sled" hypothesis, i.e., that large shallow sleds were constructed and the stones after being placed therein were skidded to the building site. The major objection to this idea is the lack of materials in the vicinity from which to fabricate the sleds. Conceivably they could have been shipped in—but this merely leads into another supply problem and, in view of the fact there is no mention of vast lumber shipments to the building site, the idea necessarily cannot be given credence.

THE difficulty of transporting the stones from Cheops' quarries, across the Nile at Assouan 40 miles away, no doubt was as apparent to the Builders as it is to the modern viewer. The stones would have been hewed at the quarry for economy's sake in transportation instead of at the building-site. At Gizeh there has never been found

(Concluded on page 164)

'I TALKED WITH GOD'

Impossible. — you say? No, it is not impossible. You can do the same thing. For there has come to the earth a brilliant, shining revelation of the power of The Spirit of God. It has come because the human race, through the Atomic Bomb — could



Dr. Frank B. Robinson

very easily annihilate itself. So the Spirit of God has spoken and the revelation and the Power that is following, staggers the imagination. In the past 18 years, **MORE THAN HALF A MILLION** people have told us without our asking them, what happened when they too discovered the actual and literal Power of The Spirit of God, right here on earth, in their own lives.

The future is dangerous. Fear fills most hearts. But may I say to you that there can come into your life, dancing flashes of the Spiritual Power of God? I mean **NOW**. And when you do find, and know this beautiful Power, whatever problems, trials, fears which may beset you, melt away under the shimmering Power of God. In place of these fears, doubts, and trials, there comes a love-

ly Peace — a Peace which only God can give —and **POWER?** — well —the human race knows little of this **POWER**, which upsets many old conceptions of God, and puts in **YOUR** hands, and mine, the Power Jesus promised when He said: —“The things that

I do shall ye do also.”

I want you to know of this Power. I live for no other purpose. For when this dynamic, invisible Power changed my life, my duty was very plain. **TELL OTHERS**—that's what God said to me, and I've been doing that faithfully for the past 18 years. Write me a simple postcard, or letter, **NOW**, and ask me for my 6000 word message, which will give you a slight insight into the most soul-stirring revelation from God this world has ever known. Address me as follows: —“**DR. FRANK B. ROBINSON**, Dept. 47-2, Moscow, Idaho and this message, which is **TOTALLY FREE**, will be sent by mail immediately. **But write now—ere you forget.** The address again—**Dr. Frank B. Robinson**, Dept. 47-2, Moscow, Idaho.

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THE CHEOPS PYRAMID; ITS CONSTRUCTION

(Concluded from page 162)

any stone-cutter debris such as chips, rejected stones, etc. Another point that arises is that no "rough" stones, even if only 1" over finished size, would have been transported from the quarry. By transporting only completely dressed stones, as contrasted with rough blocks, a considerable saving in labor could be effected. Dressing the stones at the site would introduce the necessity of living accommodations for the masons and no mention is made of such an encampment. Rather, it is recorded that "sheep in enormous numbers were grazed at the building site while the structure was erected! The "hewing" was a vast accomplishment as the wall stones fit within .1 inch, the stones composing the "arris" were fitted to .05 inch, and stones found in the "King's Chamber" are fitted to .0001 inch! This is incredibly fine workmanship in view of the fact that engineers and machinists have only recently perfected their technics to the point where they can consistently work within such a small tolerance. The stones of the "King's Chamber" that are fitted to this dimension are one hundred in number. Considering the "precision" of these blocks it is not reasonable to suppose they were lightly dragged across country for 40 miles fording a broad river en route, being tugged through deep sand, and being hauled from the floor of the Nile Valley to the plateau of Gizeh—such transporting would have resulted in extensive chipping and other damage yet no damage is discernible, even today.

The often-aided hypothesis that great steam-driven or hydraulic engines were used in constructing the Pyramid, and that large mechanisms using the "walking boom" principle were used to hoist the stones in place has been discarded by most Pyramidologists as being without scientific basis.

The use of a steam-driven mechanism would necessitate a great fuel supply at the site—this is impossible as the plateau of Gizeh is limestone and porphyry and has only a minimum of trees. Shipping the fuel is open to the same objections voiced against supplying food, i.e., no supply organization. The hydraulic method idea must be rejected as such methods would have necessitated diverting the nearest water source (Nile) to the building-site, about a 15-mile distance; no such diverting was ever performed in the immediate vicinity of Gizeh, although the Nile was diverted at other places along its course. Even if such diversion had been accomplished thousands of men would have been required in the maintenance of navigation only. The use of the "boom" principle in connection with either steam-driven, or hydraulic mechanisms is open to numerous objections. The stones used in the great structure range from 2.5 tons to 70 tons in weight and the top courses of masonry are 484' above ground level. This would require a boom a minimum of 484' in length and a boom of such size, constructed of even modern materials, would be very liable to collapse due to inherent weaknesses. The base and mechanism required for such a boom would have to be enormous and, in view of the shifting sand, it's doubtful that a base of the size needed would have been stable. The use of such engines in connection with blocks and tackle or "high-line rigging" is obviated by the same objections. The rigging pole would have to be a minimum of 484' in height and no material sufficiently long nor strong was available.

Investigations concerning the methods used at the building-site are only mental exercises at best until the question of the transportation of the blocks from the quarries is settled.

Truly the Great Pyramid is as enigmatic to the underscoring today as it was when built, and its age, its builders, and its construction details are constant sources of fruitless speculation.

The Great Pyramid is not an unsolvable mystery; to understand how it was built, the purpose for which it was built must be comprehended.

HOLIDAYS FOR KISSERS

KISSING is a universal habit, but one which is traditionally a private affair. However, some ingenious peoples have managed to institutionalize the kiss, by making it a part of a holiday ritual.

For instance, in Hungerford, England, two official kissers are elected by the people for the celebration of Hock Tuesday, the second Tuesday after Easter. Armed with a long pole wreathed with flowers and ribbons and crowned by a bouquet with an orange in the center, each of these "Tuttiman" visits the schools and demand a holiday for the children. The liberated children then follow the "Tuttiman" on a round of all the houses in the city. At each house, the "Tuttiman" stops and collects a kiss from the mistress, in return for which the lady is presented with an orange. Any woman

declining to be kissed must forfeit a penny. This custom was begun as far back as the 13th century, when it prevailed all over England, and the money collected was used for charitable purposes.

Across the channel, in Paris, another of these unusual holidays for kissers prevails. On the fete day of St. Catherine, girls who have reached the age of 25 without being married, and theoretically without being kissed, put on the historic lace bonnets of the patron saint and parade through the streets, giving all those who are able the right to steal a kiss. Hundreds of fun-loving Parisian youths await this day when they can plant the first kiss on a Catherinette. Needless to say, these young girls are not able to make their claim of never having being kissed again.

June Lurie

DRUG OF TRUTH

By Pete Bogg

SCIENCE has once more come to the aid of the detective by unearthing a drug with the amazing property of getting at the truth and nothing but the truth! Scopolamine, as it is called, is a drug made from henbane. Criminologists have already demonstrated its usefulness in the interrogation of criminals.

One of the most famous criminologists of our day, Colonel Calvin H. Goddard, conducted one of the first experiments which brought this drug into the public eye. Goddard asked one of his colleagues to write down the correct answers to a list of twenty simple questions such as "How old are you? and do you swim?" Having written down the truthful answers, the colleague was then placed under the influence of scopolamine. While in the characteristic light coma induced by this drug, he was asked to answer the same questions, but to lie in every case. Nineteen of his replies were identical with his list of truthful answers, proving that although he could hear, understand, and speak, he was unable to tell a lie about even so simple a matter as his age!

The twentieth question provided the most unrefutable proof of scopolamine's weird power to reveal the truth. The question was, "Have you ever been arrested for a motor vehicle violation?" While fully conscious, the subject of the experiment had written "No" as his answer. Under the influence of the truth-serum he replied, "Yes, while at a prep school in Virginia." When the effects of the drug had worn off, he was questioned about this contradiction, and he declared that he had forgotten all about the incident until the drug had brought it all back. Scopolamine apparently has the power of salvaging facts and memories long buried in the unconscious.

The value of the drug in solving criminal cases was demonstrated by a progressive district attorney, James G. Davis, of Birmingham, Alabama. In a single year there were twenty-five ax murderers in his city. Davis rounded up a gang of twelve suspects, administered the truth serum to all of them, and got the whole complicated story in two or three days. However, he was not allowed to use these confessions in court. By digging up the corroborative evidence obtained in those confessions, he was able to convict the guilty men.

Where this strange drug achieves its mysterious power has not yet been discovered by men of science. They are certain only of the results. Scopolamine submerges certain inhibitory areas of the brain, yet at the same time leaves intact the patient's memory, hearing, and powers of speech. Careful studies have proved that the only brain area affected is the part normally used for inventing falsehoods. With the truth serum on their side, the forces of law and justice have multiplied their effectiveness tenfold.



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DISCUSSIONS



AMAZING STORIES will publish in each issue a selection of letters from readers. Everybody is welcome to contribute. Bouquets and brickbats will have an equal chance. Inter-reader correspondence and controversy will be encouraged through this department. Get in with the gang and have your say.

READERS' REPORT ON ROWLAND

Sirs:

"Mr. Rowland's Weird Diagram," appearing in your November issue was very interesting to me as I've just finished wiring up a circuit similar to it. The circuit as Mr. Rowland drew it will not work, but a few changes in the plate circuit, and grounding the cathode circuit of the first audio amplifier (6C5) would make a very good transceiver, though I'm sure he'd have to dream up a few changes in the values shown to get any proficiency.

The PA circuit would serve for an Oscillator-Amplifier for about two meters except for the fact that the 6L6 would not operate satisfactorily at that frequency. At a lower frequency (30 Mcs. and down) a good oscillator ahead of the 6L6 power amplifier would be desired, in fact required.

The 6C5 detector is OK except for the changes shown in my diagram.

The Audio circuit is standard except the cathode circuit should be grounded as shown in my diagram.

The transformer in the plate circuit of the 6F6 should be a modulation transformer. The three 6C5's in the lower right hand corner of the diagram can serve no purpose, and I can personally guarantee that a 6C5 will not operate without a plate potential.

Put a connection for phones or PM speaker in the plate circuit of the 6F6, plug a carbon mike at that "Dot Inna Circle" at the input transformer and you have a transceiver. What are you going to do with it,

R. M. Jackson, ACRM USN
S. T. Radio Shop
NATC Patuxent River, Md.

We will not publish any of the "hot" letters from hundreds of radio men concerning Mr. Rowland's Weird Diagram, except the foregoing, which is typical of the straightforward report many sent in. Mr. Rowland's diagram comes from the Radio Amateur's Handbook, with a few changes to confuse us, and is a hoax. Our readers thank you, Mr. Rowland. You have been very helpful. Most of our readers are honest and do not stoop to sly tricks that bring no credit to their character.—Ed.

TAKE THAT, DEROPAN!

Sirs:

I am mere mortal, if dero unknowing. Early morning and a mental contact with the *Higher* somehow and upon reading letter from a dero sent in by David Scoles—this message through me, unassumingly, to throw some new light upon what has been termed the Shaver Mystery.

This will be a short message. To such as deroPan and Mr. Shaver, both will know by what **AUTHORITY** I am able to write these **REVELATIONS** and whom it is intended to help, not being these two, and if **WISE** will beware of these attempts to take falsely to themselves further powers in reader's and public's minds before they set up drastic reactions for themselves by their causing eyes to fall to these lesser lights, through themselves, and as a result misdirecting mortals as to the source of the **HIGHER HELP** (from such as dero persecution, etc.).

Message: Verily, thy true and patient Creator is not confined either to earth, caves, dero, machines, or to any of the claims and **CONCEIT** of either a single dero or group of deros, neither mortals, spirits nor **ANY** volceable **THING**. The deroPan has mixed the issue and this because dero-mind is not the Supreme, thus your Mr. Shaver is more innocent before the **ALL-LIGHT** because he shows evil, but by his claims **DOES NOT** attempt to show the Supreme **ONE** as corrupt through the **NECESSITY** of evil by Dero; thus the last shall be first and the first last. What is known as the Elder race **NOW** is **NOT** the race deroPan depicted, and **IS** evolved. Without the movements of evolutionary growth a standstill maintains whereas then by this the Elder race would be equal to the **HIGH ONE** or strictly perfect—then being a race thus not embodied. By these precepts many mortals on the lower rungs will be saved from lesser lights (conceit). This message is not valid by mortal or dero claim but derives its validity from **D. A.**—on to which letters let mind-gifted one, deroPan gaze, and admit **HIGHER** than his english words. Verily a condescension for dero? Shaver is **NOT** dero but a deroPan said he was, truth has been seen with ease. Shaver knows the all light and unlike deroPan will not stand between it and mortals to be **BURNED** by its consuming **LOVE RAYS**. The Bible is **NOT** merely a book called genesis, likewise dero-will and its avenues of expression do not

comprise the whole of evil neither can qualify under "G" for transmutation of evil to good. All light love rays soon futurely will crisp these lesser gods (deros etc): thou shall have no other gods before me. Dero will not replace ALL LIGHT—lesser FORCE before All-light is illusion macro-cosmically and microcosmically. Dero and all such are of lesser force, voice and light but seek the high value in mortals minds. Shaver is mortal and good hut only mortal, higher power is OF HIGHER POWER—not of Dero—truth should cringe Dero if honesty were possible to its co-habitants. Shaver is honest, hut Dero is his persecutor, whips him, then whips him for crying, THEN honors? him as renegade dero. Our VISION is CLEARED NOW. More of this later ONLY.

T.E.—G.R.
by authority D.M.
G. Cross

Apparently here we have a message from the Tero, defending Shaver against the character who calls himself DeroPan. Offhand, we'd say that T.E. and G.R. have a good point about dero, and we're satisfied to call this the winner in the battle between DeroPan and Tero, if that's what it is. Go crawl in your hole, DeroPan!—Ed.

THANK YOU, SOUTH AFRICA

Sirs:

For years I have been reading Amazing Stories on and off and am now a regular subscriber. I think its the best Science Fiction magazine ever published.

I have just finished reading the June, July and August editions and regard Heinrich Hauser's "Agharti" as a classic. I am very interested in the Shaver Mystery.

Could you possibly tell me where I can procure a copy of Oakspe?

I am looking forward to the day when AS will be twice as thick as now. Keep up the good work—you have many fans in South Africa.

P. Haupt
P. O. BOX 1
Colesberg, S. Africa

Of course we think you're correct about Amazing being the best magazine ever published. Also that "Agharti" was a classic. As for "Oakspe" it can be procured from Wing Anderson, North Salt Lake, Utah, for \$5.00. We too are looking forward to the day when paper conditions allow us to return to the thick books we used to publish.—Ed.

REPLY FROM HEFFERLIN

Sirs:

Your letter received. We wish to thank you for your comments in reference to the vagueness of the articles. Upon reviewing them as pointed out by you, we realize that they were hut a brief

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schematic of the entertainment field pertaining to the Rainbow City, its contents, etc.

We at the moment see no other way of presenting the pictures, except as pure fiction; and if articles must be proven fact, then fiction in story form is indicated in order to present the information on Rainbow City, etc.

No subterfuge was meant or indicated by us. But we must consider the seriousness of the International Situation. We felt at the time of writing "POWER", and we feel now, that full construction information on #3 units should not be placed in the hands of the general public.

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For you and your colleagues to presume operational failure in the other articles printed, based on your failure with #3 in "POWER" article, is rather biased. The theory is basically sound and provable on all five articles.

In reference to #3 units as mentioned in "POWER" article, we wish to know with whom we are dealing, what authorities, officials or agents, and with what nation?

W. C. Hefferlin,
Ray-Dox Mfg. Co.,
Livingston, Montana

For those of our readers who requested more specific information on how to build the gadgets described in Mr. Hefferlin's article "POWER", this is his official answer. It is "verboden". Rainbow City, incidentally, is the headquarters, a deserted city of the Gods (or Elder race) under the ice of the Pole, where all the gadgets mentioned and thousands more are perfectly preserved for thousands of years. As to what nation you deal with, none. We are the editors and readers of Amazing Stories and as such, a great many of us are interested in the advancement of mankind, and in the solving of mystery, such as the Shaver Mystery and the mystery of the many unexplained things that happen daily on earth and are ignored by those scientists who are unwilling to admit they cannot solve them with their present knowledge. Personally, your editor believes no weapon should be placed in ANYONE'S hands. We are against war, violence, murder. We would certainly not make such a weapon as your #3 was reputed to be available to anybody. To be quite truthful, we are tickled to death to know that your #3 is secret, or is not workable (whichever is true). We hope it stays that way. We printed it in the first place because if it were to be workable, we preferred that the whole world have it, rather than any group of individuals who might use it to nefarious ends. How do you think about it?—Ed.

A READER SENDS A CLIPPING

Sirs:

The enclosed clipping appeared in the Los Angeles Daily News of August 11, 1946.

I am maintaining an impartial attitude toward your controversy of the caves. I am merely passing this article on for what you may think of it.

H. A. Tewes,
441 W. Windsor Road
Glendale 4, Calif.

Thank you, Mr. Tewes. The clipping tells of an ex-Wac and high school teacher who shot herself to death because the "Nasis are beaming me with a ray". This report is typical of many we have, from many sources. Many of the victims—most of them—have never heard of Shaver and his dero rays, but just the same they attribute their troubles to the same thing. We consider hundreds of unrelated reports such as this to be a very good proof that Shaver is right. If some insist that it is not, then we ask those people to explain what it IS if not rays? Would you say all these people are insane, and have IDENTICAL delusions? You mathematicians, how about the chances AGAINST any two madmen having IDENTICAL delusions? Read your newspapers for proof. It's there every day!—Ed.

OH MY GOODNESS!

Sirs:

Will you please print this poem in *Amazing Stories* so I can express my idea of Shaver? For, to get along with my boy friend, I must read the Shaver Mystery each month!

DEAR MR. SHAVER

You great big lug!

If I were there, I'd sock you in the mug.
How many kisses do you think I've missed,
Because I didn't believe in such stories as this?
If I were there, I wouldn't give you a hug,
For each dero mentioned, I'd give you a slug.
You broke up my romance, not once but twice;
But go on, Shaver, you're throwing the dice,
Those d— dero stories really do it.
But tell me, little man, do you really believe
There's anything to it?
For whisky and women are no competition;
When it comes to Shaver Mystery, what a hell of
a proposition!

I'm ashamed to have been born in the state you live in;

You give me a pain, Shaver, go sit on a pin!

Zelma Jester,
Gen. Delivery
Muncie, Indiana.

Really, Zelma, we're sorry. We think you ought to tell your boy friend you'll select your own reading. What kind of a guy is he? Maybe HE'S a dero! In which case we believe in him, but just to get even, why don't you make him read *Mammoth Detective*?—Ed.

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WEIGHT VERSUS INERTIA

Sirs:

I have read every issue of *Amazing Stories*. To do this, I have bought it all over the world.

So it is with sorrow that I note the deterioration in the magazine through printing stories by persons with no knowledge of mathematics, engineering and science in general.

Being one of those who have had experiences not discussed much in ordinary circles, I was much interested in the "Shaver Mystery". The "alpha-bet" in particular was absorbingly interesting. But—in the current issue (November) Shaver reveals himself as a pitiable moronic charlatan. I had supposed that the average 8th grade student of elementary physics would never confuse "weight" and "inertia". Why not have some adult scan all your stories for such ridiculous concep-
tions?

Albert Garinger,
248 S. Olive St.,
Los Angeles, Cal.

Let's start a discussion *pro* and *con* on this weight-inertia business! First, just what is it that makes a bit of matter "weigh"? You'll answer, gravity, of course. Gravity pulls it toward the center of the earth. What is "gravity"? The attraction of mass you'll say. A mysterious something that is a "property" of matter. And what is "inertia"? It's the "unwillingness" of matter to "get under way". You push it, and it resists moving. Why? A "property" of matter. Okay now, we've got a lot of definitions, none of which are themselves definable by science. The only way science can define them is to "pass a law", "promulgate a theory", or say "it's so—wanna make something of it, you non-degree holder, you?"

Can we say that these "properties" of matter are something they possess *ALL OF THE TIME*, or only when we make actual laboratory tests of matter in our science laboratories? How would an 8th grader *KNOW* whether or not those "properties" of matter hold true out in "empty" space, or in Shaver's "zones of weightlessness"? Or is there also a zone of "inertialessness"?

Don't go blooming for all the "laws" scientists have passed—they are really only theories. And besides, any real scientist knows enough not to be dogmatic about a thing that changes so swiftly as does scientific knowledge. Not so long ago any elements more complex (atomically) than radium and uranium were supposed to be too unstable to exist. Instability, or radioactivity, is only an intermediary step in the change-over of one element to another—when one element *BECOMES* another. But let's not be dogmatic about it either—let's argue it out. Let's call on the scientists first. Come on, boys, define weight and inertia in *Amazing Stories* language. That is, so we can understand it.—Ed.

LETTER TO MR. L. TAYLOR HANSEN

Sirs:

Your future article on "The Bearded White Prophet" which appeared in the February 1946 issue of *Amazing Stories* has been a source of much discussion among a group of machinists at the General Tire and Rubber Plant #2 in Pasadena during their lunch period. And because of the interest which it has aroused in the group regarding this land of ours the general consensus of opinion among the boys is that we should express our appreciation to you for your efforts in research and writing on this subject as well as expressing our appreciation to the *Amazing Stories* magazine for publishing this most excellent article which you have prepared. So please consider this letter as being written to you in a spirit of approval for your writings, and will you, in turn, please convey our thanks to the editors and publishers of *Amazing Stories*?

At the outset of our discussions there was much scepticism at some of the facts which you state. For much of your researches lay beyond the field of our experience and reading. In fact an intelligent discussion was only possible after consulting the references which you cited plus some others approximating fifty in number. At the present we are inclined to agree that *all you said is true* but that you have been guilty of understatement. Please permit a listing of some of the reasons why we believe you have been guilty of understatement.

Quetzalcoatl was born of a virgin if we are to believe the interpreter of *Codex Vaticanus A* who says:

They declare that their supreme deity Tonacateotl, whom we have just mentioned, who by another name was called Citinatónali, when it appeared good to him, breathed and begot Quetzalcoatl, not by connexion with a woman, but by his breath alone, as we have observed above, when he sent his ambassador as they say to the virgin of Tula. They believed him to be the god of the air and he was the first to whom they built temples and churches, which they formed perfectly round without any angles. They say that it was he who effected the reformation of the world by penance, since as, according to their account, his father had created the world, and men had given themselves up to vice, on which account it had been so frequently destroyed, Citinatónali sent his son into the world to reform it . . . As they considered him their advocate, they celebrated a solemn festival, and feasted during four signs.

—Quoted from the work of Lord Edward King Kingsborough, *Antiquities of Mexico*. Nine Volumes.

London, 1831-48. Vol. 6, pp 207-208. Also to be found in the work of Lewis Spence, *The Gods of Mexico*. F. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., London, 1923. pp 128, 131, 132.

The morning star was associated with him as his symbol and the temple at Cholula was ex-

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pressly dedicated to him as the author of light. —See Daniel G. Brinton, *The Myths of the New World*, New York, 1876, p 196.

He disappeared mysteriously. Francisco Lopez de Gomara, who was a Spanish writer of the sixteenth century, and who seemed to derive his information from the highest sources says in his *Conquest of Mexico*, Medina, 1553:

Green que no murio, sino que se desparecio en la provincia de Coazacoalco, junto al mar. Tal lo pintan cual yo cuento, a Quetzalcoatl; y proque no saben o porque encubren su muerte, lo tienen por el dios del aire ye lo demas pueblos que fundo; y asi le hucen en ellos extranos ritos y sacrificios. (The Mexicans believe that he did die, but that he disappeared in the province of Coatzacoalcos, close to the sea. They paint Quetzalcoatl such as I have described; and because they do not know, or because they conceal his death, they believe him to be the god of the air, and worship him in all that country, but principally in Tlaxcallan and Cholula, and in other cities which he founded, and accordingly they celebrate strange rites and sacrifices in them to him.)

—Quoted by Kingsborough, Volume 6, page 407.

This hero-god was always represented by various tribes inhabiting America to be "of the white race, a man of fair complexion, with long, flowing beard." But let us examine the remarks of Dr. Brinton at some length:

The native tribes of this Continent had many myths, and among them there was one which was so prominent, and recurred with such strangely similar features in localities widely asunder, that it has for years attracted my attention, and I have been led to present it as it occurs among several nations far apart, both geographically and in point of culture. This myth is that of the national hero, their mythical civilizer and teacher of the tribe, who, at the same time, was often identified with the supreme Deity and the Creator of the world. It is the fundamental myth of a very large number of American tribes, and on its recognition and interpretation depends the correct understanding of most of their mythology and religious life.

The outlines of this legend are to the effect that in some exceedingly remote time this divinity took an active part in creating the world and in fitting it to be the abode of man, and may himself have formed or called forth the race. At any rate, his interest in its advancement was such that he personally appeared among the ancestors of the nation, and taught them the useful arts, gave them the maize or other food plants, initiated them into the mysteries of their religious rites, framed the laws which governed their social relations, and having thus started them on the road to self-development, he left them, not suffering death, but disappearing in some way from their view. Hence, it was *nigh universally expected that at some time he would return* . . . (Italics are the writer's L. V. Mc.)

The place of his birth is nearly always located

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editor), J. B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia, 1937.

We have indulged in much speculation as to the identity of the Bearded Prophet. Some have been inclined to believe that Jesus Christ did appear to the inhabitants of America. But Chas. F. Diggins of 1940 Mentone Ave., Pasadena 3, California advanced the following rather ingenious theory.

The Bearded Prophet was one of Christ's Twelve Apostles. In support of such a thought he contends the following: (1) We know but little of the actual happenings of history except (A) that which has been written, (B) that which occurs in legend, fable, and myth, (C) that which is found in the remains of civilizations, (D) or the changes which man has wrought upon the earth which remain. (2) It is not out of character with the known facts about Phoenician seafarers to suppose that at some distant time some courageous and hardy soul did actually open up and continue trade routes between the old world and the new. Traces of the civilizations of Egypt and Babylon which persist in the New World tend to support this assumption. (3) The myths, legends, and religious rites which persisted until the time of the Spanish conquest tend to support the assertion that principles of Christianity had been taught to the peoples at some remote time. Present day ruins and remains tend to support this contention. Because of the legends which persists, this Apostle (disciple) must have been accompanied by one or more followers. (4) Hydrographic surveys of ocean currents tend to show that a ship set adrift in the Straits of Gibraltar would have the greatest possibility of landing somewhere upon the shores of Yucatan.

Mr. Diggins' theory seems to be tenable. It requires but little stretch of the imagination to envision a stone-hound ship being swept westward through the Gates of Hercules into the silences of the Atlantic Ocean. Nor does it require much imagination to see in the mind's eye this apostle, perhaps the Apostle Paul returning to his home after being tried at Rome, gathered with his followers, white-faced, grim-lipped, fear in their hearts, but trust in their souls, kneeling upon the deck of that fragile bark while they asked the God of their trust, the Lord of their deliverance, to aid them in their peril and to give them safe deliverance. Picture them driven day after day across the trackless waters of a frindless ocean, no sight of land, no sound of a friendly voice but their own, on and on until all but the apostle, their leader, had given up in despair. At last when he too had begun to doubt the Lord, land comes into view, and Praise God! they set their feet upon strange but friendly soil. Or on the other hand it is not impossible that some apostle hearing of secret trade routes with the New World, and fired with a desire to carry the new and precious gospel of Jesus to heathen souls, secretly hoarded a ship by night, which by night set sail, a nameless ship bound for a nameless place. And who shall say that the master of the ship having left the Apostle on the shores of a new world did

not fill his hold with strange things and having returned from whence he came, fell beneath an assailant's knife for the purse of gold at his belt and thus the secret of the apostle and the new trade route was lost to the world?

At any rate please accept our thanks for your excellent article and please may we have some more upon the same thing?

Laurel V. McElwain
for the boys.
2477 St. Pierre Ave.,
Altadena, Cal.

Thank you very much, Mr. McElwain! We know full well how popular Mr. Hansen's articles are, and we know, too, how important they are. Amazing Stories is proud to be the first to present the actual research of a scientist, "hot off the griddle" so to speak. No other magazine can make that claim, as the popular radio saying goes! We publish your letter as a valuable adjunct to the work of Mr. Hansen. Some day his text will be a must on the science of man's origin and his migrations.—Ed.

MORE IDEAS ON THE SHAVER MYSTERY

Sirs:

Mr. Shaver's exposition of degenerative derangs and those ancient beliefs of an intelligence in extra-terrestrial powers of the universe is extremely interesting. He does not say anything new to those who do have access to the study of the abstract of mind and body, being or non-being, or a generally higher outlook into a seemingly unfathomable universe. One must say, however, his stories are fiction—yet some ideas contained therein reflect a truth unusual in our age of extreme materialism.

His exposition of the ancient Norse mythology in "The Return Of Sathanas" is most enlightening. Although I do not believe in the Jotuns or giants having been monsters, these stories are vivid memories of a now non-existent race of giant men, just as much as the sagas pertaining to a numerous race of dwarfs, or elves, also reflect far-reaching memories of bygone ages. Perhaps the ancient giants were a horrid clan, but perhaps only so in our distorted memory.

Mr. Shaver, however, missed a point worth mentioning. He never even mentioned the dwarf races of the Norse mythology, composed of the dark elves living underground, in the earth; and the light elves. Tribes of dark dwarfs are still living in Africa, South India and Dutch New Guinea, and a race of dwarfs populated the shores of Yucatan some time ago if we may judge the size of some ruins discovered there. Among the Philistines lived a giant of good size whom David killed with a slingshot.

The only ones almost exclusively populating the underground according to the Norse sagas, were the dwarfs. Although in the sagas the nine hells of the evil and dead are also located beneath the



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surface, we must not mix up such beliefs in an existence after death with a knowledge of the one-time existence of dwarf-sized races on earth. Very few of the giants (Jotuns) were living inside of mountains. The matter is really worthwhile to be investigated.

Mr. Shaver, in describing extra-terrestrial powers of the universe as being units of growing and thinking Intelligence is remarkable in a way. Science in such matters thinks of mass and energy or mass-energy only. No one will deny the possibility of evolution of mass-energy inasmuch as all things change from one form to another, creating birth, growth and change (death). Mr. Shaver has one over on the scientists describing the scientific "energy" as being "Intelligent power" or "living power with intelligence." The idea is very ancient. After all, that bundle of energy called "spark of life" is power, is intelligent and is certainly nothing we can ignore or sneeze at.

Mr. Shaver's idea that destructive rays (dero) of the universe are responsible for much degeneration among mankind is certainly the truth. Some day in the future our science will be far enough advanced to investigate the effect of cosmic and other rays upon man and perhaps rectify some matters. In the meantime, we will have to struggle along as well as we can and make the best of it to build our miserable concept of perfection.

Erich Stirnemann,
2014 Beloit Ave.,
Los Angeles, Calif.

We're glad to see you concur with us in saying that Mr. Shaver's story has much truth in it, especially in his unique interpretation of legend. The fact is, Mr. Shaver makes no interpretation, but depends solely on his source of information, which is the thought record of the caves, and that amounts (if true) to actual eye-witness account, and not distorted legend that has lost most of its identity of truth.—Ed.

HE GETS "ANSWERS"

Sirs:

For some time now I have been "thinking" questions and receiving written answers. I will never fully believe that the caves exist until I see for myself, but I am proceeding on the assumption that they do because it would explain my experiences better than anything else.

Some of the "answers" I get are so full of foul language and lies that they must be from dero. However, I have had some very nice talks with persons claiming to be tero. These sources have given me "cave" entrance locations with "warnings" plus the plans for a "radiophone" and a "degravitator". They might just have been leading me on. I don't know. I never tried the devices. They look like they would work, especially the radio diagram.

The enclosed sketch came from a dero named "Steve" in Detroit, or rather, from under Detroit. The dero have such simple, but evil brains that I tried an experiment. I tried suggestion, and think, (I'm not sure) I got him asleep. Then I proceeded

to ask him questions and I'll be darned if he didn't seem to give some answers that made sense. All the wise cracks stopped, and the rollat sketch is one result. You are about the only one that could tell me if I have been tricked again or not. I have no way of being sure.

"Steve" (dero) says there are a few tero in this section, but I've seen no evidence of them. I have been stung by a few rays though (from the dero). Not a pleasant experience!

Here is what I want to know:

1. Can a dero be put to sleep by "suggestion"? And can he be controlled by me?

2. Is the sketch of one type of rollat correct or not?

3. Are there tero in this section who would help me?

I hope you can shed some light on what I have told you. I would like to check other information I have also.

Norman S. Kossuth,
86 Cedarhurst,
Detroit 3, Michigan.

What you have been doing is a phenomenon known as automatic writing. From the sample you sent us, we would agree that it is authentic, as it bears all the typical characteristics. Guided by the cavern wight you call "Steve", you do get answers. It is a cinch that almost all of them will be outright lies. In answer to your questions, we'd say that it is quite possible that a dero (your Steve) can be put to sleep by suggestion. In that state, he might answer truthfully. We wouldn't trust the sketch of the rollat, although we are asking Mr. Shaver about it. We don't know about helpful tero. Mr. Shaver says Detroit had some once, that when he fled that city, they had been killed off by dero. We are quite interested in "Steve". Why not ask him a list of questions concerning himself, and send his answers to us. Suggested line of questioning: What is your full name? Did you ever live on the surface? What was your address then? Do you know any other surface people? When did you go to the caves, if you ever were on the surface? How were you taken there? Can you see the sun? How; by actual trips to the surface, or by television ray? What do you eat? And so on. Best question of all, how can you contact him in person! Your editor would like to see the material you have "written" in its entirety, and would appreciate your cooperation in this in the future. It may be quite important. We have no reason to doubt the authenticity of your letter or of your experiences.—Ed.

NOTE TO READERS

Due to mechanical difficulties, this and future issues of *Amazing Stories* may not present the orderly development of the Shaver Mystery, or, in fact, of its usual fiction content. We hope that the readers will bear with us, and that in the event scheduled stories do not appear as indicated, you will be assured that they will appear as soon as is possible.—The Editors.

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